A PRIMER OF WORDSWORTH

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WITH

A CRITICAL ESSAY

BY

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TO MY MOTHER

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CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHY

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, whose life and works it is the object of this Primer to make easy of access, was born at Cockermouth, in Cumberland, in the month of spring which he made peculiarly his own—on April 7th, 1770. He was the second of five children, four sons and a daughter, born to John Wordsworth, of yeoman descent, law agent to Lord Lonsdale, and Anne, his wife, daughter of Christopher Cookson, of Penrith. He died in the same month, on the anniversary of Shakespeare's birth and death, on April 23rd, 1850. The eighty years covered by his life are a critical chapter in the history of the west. But of the movements which made that period remarkable, a single feature stands prominently out—the search for liberty, and its experiment in democracy. To this master-problem of his age Wordsworth's genius was given.

The record of the poet's life falls naturally into two unequal divisions, the first of personal, the second of literary interest. The first ends about 1795, in Wordsworth's twenty-sixth year, and is faithfully narrated in his autobiographical poem, *The Prelude*. The second extends from that date to his death, and its interest is practically limited to the contents-tables of his works. The key to this division lies in the fact that, up to the date of departure mentioned, Wordsworth followed the letter of historical

events, but confined himself, after that year, to the interpretation of their spirit and ideal. He changed from the pioneer of revolution to the prophet of freedom.

Cockermouth.

There was more of the revolutionary than of the prophet in William Wordsworth, the child. "Fair seed-time had my soul," he writes, and he tells us how from babyhood itself he enjoyed the licence of the open air. Derwent, the river on which Cockermouth, his birthplace, stands, murmured his lullabies even in his nurse's arms,

> "giving me,
> Amid the fretful dwellings of mankind,
> A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm
> That Nature breathes among the hills and groves" (i. 278).*

And when he arrived at the discretion of walking, the wise young parents† respected the savagery of childhood:

> "Oh, many a time have I, a five years' child,
> In a small mill-race severed from his stream,
> Made one long bathing of a summer's day;
> Basked in the sun, and plunged and basked again
> Alternate, all a summer's day, or scoured
> The sandy fields, leaping through flowery groves
> Of yellow ragwort; or, when rock and hill,
> The woods, and distant Skiddaw's lofty height,
> Were bronzed with deepest radiance, stood alone
> Beneath the sky, as if I had been born
> On Indian plains, and from my mother's hut
> Had run abroad in wantonness, to sport
> A naked savage, in the thunder shower" (i. 288).

He was not always alone. There was a village school which he attended, kept by Dame Birkett at Penrith, where

* The quotations thus designated by book and line in the present chapter are taken from *The Prelude*.

† John Wordsworth had been twenty-five, and Anne nineteen, at the time of their marriage.

Mary Hutchinson, his future wife, was a tiny pupil too. And at home, an elder brother, Richard, of whom little is heard; two younger ones, Christopher, who grew up to be Master of Trinity, and John, the sailor, who found a watery grave,* made up a merry household; while Dorothy,† the only sister, was then, as ever, with a brief interval of separation, the best companion of her favourite brother. These two ran wild together, laying up for later years an inalienable inheritance of pleasant memories in common.

The training had the defects of its qualities. Writing in 1847,‡ the poet recalls that he was "of a stiff, moody, and violent temper." He gives two illustrations of this, the one a piece of boyish destructiveness, the other of childish sulks. No doubt the want of restraint at home was partly responsible for this lack of self-control. Mrs Wordsworth said that, of her five children, William's future alone caused her anxiety—"he would be remarkable either for good or for evil." Unfortunately she did not live to see the better fulfilment of her prophecy. The mother's hand was removed when the mother's eye had just sighted her difficulties. In the poet's ninth year Anne Wordsworth died, and William was sent to Hawkshead School, where Richard, his elder, had preceded him. The widowed father only survived his wife five years, and in 1783 the young family was dispersed. Two uncles, Richard Wordsworth and Christopher Crackanthorpe, divided the charge of the children. They were liberal but ungenial men, and Dorothy, who spent her girlhood alternately at their houses, felt her orphan's state more hardly than her schoolboy brothers.

* Cp. *The Happy Warrior*, p. 113 infra, and p. 35.

† Dorothy was twenty months younger than William. Cp. *The Sparrows' Nest*, p. 94 infra.

‡ *Autobiographical Memoranda*, dictated to his nephew.

Hawkshead.

Hawkshead was a grammar school of the sixteenth century, exceptional at this time among English institutions for its enlightened system of pedagogics. From Wordsworth we hear nothing of the complaints and grievances which embittered the boyhood of Coleridge or Lamb. On the contrary, the close of the first and the whole of the second book of *The Prelude* give an account of the poet's life at this period, which is unique among such records. It was not that the instruction imparted was remarkable in character or teaching; but the liberty which the boys enjoyed, the encouragement given to their self-development, the intimate relations between master and pupils, the singular system of boarding, by which boys resided with cottage dames,* the intercourse permitted, if not promoted, between the boys and the villagers, their consequent quickened understanding of rural life and rustic manners—in a word, its indoor and outdoor simplicity and freedom made Hawkshead School worthy of its worthiest pupil. For at the same time the boys were far from being spoiled. They rose early and fed sparely, under the traditional *régime* of the founder, Archbishop Sandys, ably seconded by a succession of admirable masters. For four years of Wordsworth's time (1782-86) the headmaster was William Taylor, whose early death in the later year is twice commemorated in the poet's works. In 1794 (*Prel.*, x. 532-52) Wordsworth visits his grave, and recalls the incitement which his own talents had received from Taylor's discriminating sympathy; and again, in 1798, in Goslar, Germany, William Taylor was the subject of the *Address to the Scholars of the Village School of* ——, while the *Matthew* pieces of the same place and time owe to him too the chief and best traits of their composite hero.

* Cp. especially *Prel.* iv. 17-92, where Anne Tyson, Wordsworth's Dame, is commemorated in immortal lines.

The Hawkshead training was peculiarly valuable to Wordsworth, and much needless suffering was no doubt averted by its sensible discipline and the absence of arbitrary rules. For the roving child grew up to exacting boyhood. He could take his share in the sports of his school-fellows, skating (i. 425), kite-flying (i. 491), or "loo or whist" (i. 515); but his spirit imperiously required frequent intervals of solitude. More clearly than the poet himself, we can read into his record "the growth of a poet's mind." The fear of nature was the first insistent emotion. One day, when barely ten years old, he was snaring wood-cocks on Coniston Moor, by moonlight. He stole the prey of another's springe, and nature's own voices seemed to avenge the wrong. We can picture the boy, scudding beneath the stars, and hearing in the "low breathings" of the "solitary hills," the footsteps of the furies of the night (i. 317). Or in Yewdale, birds'-nesting among the rocks in May, and hanging, as it appeared to him, on the skirts of the blast, a sudden sense of danger overcame him. The wind blew then with a strange, alien utterance; "the sky seemed not a sky of earth—and with what motion moved the clouds!" (i. 338). Or on a summer's evening he stealthily rowed out on Esthwaite Water, and again nature punished him for his misdoing. The boat changed, in his fancy, to an "elfin pinnace," a huge peak towered before his frightened gaze, in shape and purpose like a pursuing monster, and the terrors of the lonely vision survived in his dreams by night (i. 400). Or the swift motion of his skates in winter communicated to the surrounding cliffs, when he stopped suddenly short, a life and motion of their own, "and all the shadowy banks on either side came sweeping through the darkness" (i. 454).

A year or two later, and the subtler sense of the beauty of nature broke upon Wordsworth like an inspiration. Keener than her first power for "extrinsic passion," he began to receive "a pure

> "Organic pleasure from the silver wreaths
> Of curling mist, or from the level plain
> Of waters coloured by impending clouds "(i. 564).

Amid the scenery of Westmoreland and Cumbria, the revelation came to this young boy, in "gleams like the flashing of a shield," of the infinite beauty of creation, and its eternal testimony to some divine standard, higher than use, surviving the mistakes of men. This was not a sensuous thing, like the fear or the joy that pass, but it became an affection of the mind, an abiding intellectual disposition, dormant for a while beneath the weight of vulgar life, but rememberable, and to be revived at last in the peopled spaces of solitary thought. In this mood, which Wordsworth seems to have finally attained in his seventeenth year, the joy is secondary and in sublimer kind. It is derived from the evidence in nature's simplest phenomena of nature's universal and unifying purpose. This bath of sense in reason, this Titanic recreation of the mind, Wordsworth, the youth, in a merry crowd of schoolfellows on horseback, or rowing on Winander's lake, or walking with a single friend, or "alone under the quiet stars" (ii. 85, 164, etc.) came more and more to achieve. It will be seen that the process was one of unconscious induction, and at this time Wordsworth was touched by the passion for inductive reasoning which clung to him always in his love for mathematics. Of books in the poet's training we hear very little, and of the Hawkshead curriculum still less; but by now at least, in Wordsworth's first period of general ideas, we know that he had read six

books of Euclid, and was creditably acquainted with algebra. It is to be presumed, from what we know of the school, that these subjects were taught, not on the rote system, but with an intelligent appreciation of their training value in abstract and independent thought.

Cambridge.

In October 1787, at any rate, when Wordsworth, by the generosity of his uncles, went up to Cambridge as an undergraduate of St John's, he found himself "with a full twelve months' start of the freshmen of his year." He did not resist this temptation to indolence, but abandoned the study of pure mathematics for literature and the romance of science. During his first year of residence he read Italian, with Agostino Isola, a grandfather of Mrs Moxon, his future publisher's wife; while, wanting the habit of assiduity (iii. 359 and foll.), he forsook the drudgery of analysis and formulation, to lose himself in vague, delightful dreams, on the borderland of metaphysics and history, skimming, like a butterfly, in the garden of thought,

> "From star to star, from kindred sphere to sphere,
> From system on to system without end;" *

and he drew, he tells us, from this source of meditation, the sanction of the Being of God—the philosopher's First Cause, if not definitively the Deity of Christian dogma.

* vi. 127-8. Cp. the whole passage, vi. 95-189. But Wordsworth's indolence was constitutional, and only an aspect of his poet's sympathies. His sister, in a letter of June 26th, 1791, very justly wrote: "He gave way to his natural dislike to studies so dry as many parts of the mathematics; consequently could not succeed in Cambridge. He reads Italian, Spanish, French, Greek, Latin and English [he afterwards learnt German too]; but never opens a mathematical book . . . Do not think from what I have said that he reads not at all; for he does read a great deal, and not only poetry, in these languages he is acquainted with, but History also."—See Knight's *Eversley Wordsworth*, vol. iii. p. 178.

This neglect of the Schools point of view may be from principle or idleness. Its material effect is the same, and Wordsworth missed his fellowship. But in truth, Cambridge had, in the last years of the eighteenth century, but few attractions for this mountain lad. He could appreciate—it appealed to his historical sense—the tradition of cloistral life which bound him to the generations that had been. The poets, above all, who are the especial glory of Cambridge, and Milton, chief among the poets, were recreated in his imagination, as he paced in their echo and shadow (iii. 269-324); and in the ampler perspective of the ancient University, the very greatness of the great seemed humanised and humbled to a more familiar kinship. He could appreciate, too, perhaps a trifle overconsciously, the peculiar transitional grace, that is part of the charm of University life, the "something that resembles an approach towards human business" (iii. 35-45, 511-33). He could find, too, the spirit of the mountains rediscovered on the bosom of the plain, nature triumphant over her own diversity. But for the rest he was out of place, and in later life he was bound to his *alma mater* rather by the tradition of filial love than by any deep conviction of her surpassing beauty. "The stream-like windings of that glorious street," the High in Oxford, almost made him unfaithful to his "own beloved Cam." * For, in point of fact, the tide of intellectual life at the University was at this time at its lowest ebb. "Newton," says Professor Legouis, "was the veritable God of Cambridge, and his *Principia* her Bible." † And, though Wordsworth, from his bed in the first court of St

* Cp. *Miscellaneous Sonnets*, part iii. 2. *Oxford, May 30th, 1820.*

† *La Jeunesse de Wordsworth*, p. 76. The whole chapter "Cambridge" is of considerable value.

John's, could see, on a moonlight night, into Trinity antechapel,

> "where the statue stood
> Of Newton with his prism and silent face,
> The marble index of a mind for ever
> Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone" (iii. 60),

yet he was unlikely to follow the fashion of the hour, and bow his intellect to Newton's yoke. Equally unlikely was he, in the interval between Bentley's death and Porson's professorship, to gather from "the trade in classic niceties" (vi. 109) refreshment from a living spring of literature and language. Moreover, Cambridge was affected at this time by a reaction against the tendencies of free thought. Her disputatious theologians confined their high argument to a narrow circle of Anglican gospel; and the literal restraint which the Hawkshead boy now for the first time experienced was repeated in the mental fetters which his tutors sought to impose upon him,—"Let them parade among the Schools at will, but spare the House of God." (iii. 407). For this, then, and for his natural disposition to independent paths of study, Wordsworth's Cambridge experiment was not altogether a success. He passed his days in alternate frivolity and solitude, spending, as he says, the morning hours in "unprofitable talk," the afternoons in boisterous parties on horse or on the river, yet not wanting, at intervals frequent enough to save the derelict from wreck, serious thought in the silent companionship of the stars, or the subtler local influences shed by the place itself. Of her many great sons whom Cambridge gave to the muse, Wordsworth cannot be called the most devoted; but there is a large reserve of gratitude and affection in his temperate statement,

—"For myself
I grieve not; happy is the gownèd youth,
Who only misses what I missed, who falls
No lower than I fell" (iii. 493).

Vacations.

The gifts that suffered rust in term-time were repaired in the "Longs." The summer of 1788 was spent by Wordsworth in Westmoreland and Lancashire. He revisited his old school and haunts, coming back to them, less with the conscious dignity that a new-fledged 'Varsity man affects, than with a half-fearful, half-hopeful recognition of subjective change, and a scrupulous desire to define it aright. The fear was in the vanished unperplexedness and faith of childhood, in the unrest and the "swarm of heady schemes" that were superadded; the hope was in the "human-heartedness" that had arisen on his wider horizon, in which, for instance, Dame Tyson was revealed in the grave, tender lights of her village evening.* For the sense of proportion, which is fine humour, was born; it required only experience to perfect it. And among the men and maids of his native place, reading them clearly, as he says, yet finding their revelry not unwelcome, there came to him, out of the pageantry of a mountain sunrise, the first call to the service of mankind: "I made no vows, but vows were then made for me, . . . that I should be, else sinning greatly, a dedicated spirit" (iv. 334).

The vacation of 1789 saw the beginning of that triple companionship which was to settle later in a single household. For Dorothy Wordsworth, "now, after separation desolate, restored to me," joined her brother in his excursions into Derbyshire and Yorkshire, and with her came their fellow-pupil at Penrith School, Mary Hutchinson, grown to attractive girlhood.

* Cp. Book iv., especially 191-255.

In July 1790, a longer journey was essayed, for Wordsworth and Robert Jones, a College friend, started on a walking tour in Switzerland. The idea was as novel in the untravelled countryside of that day as the appearance of the travellers was strange. They went, in the words of the *Memoranda*, "staff in hand, without knapsacks, and carrying each his needments tied up in a pocket-handkerchief, with about twenty pounds apiece in our pockets." But the novelty of the experiment was equalled by the freshness of their impressions. The greater portion of the sixth book of *The Prelude* * is devoted to the record of this journey, and it is remarkable, not alone for many passages ever memorable in literature, but for the picture which it gives of a pair of young and unsophisticated Englishmen, seeing France and Switzerland on the eve of the French Republic † and before the era of Cook's tours. That William Wordsworth was one of the pair is only to say, that on that day a new force was born for English liberties and poetry,—

> "there we saw,
> In a mean city, and among a few,
> How bright a face is worn when joy of one
> Is joy for tens of millions" (vi. 346).

To win this joy was Wordsworth's constant task.

1791-2. We have now to follow the poet through a troubled period. When he took his Bachelor's degree, in the January before his twenty-first birthday, he was quite undecided to what use to put his talents. His uncles, no doubt, on whom the burden of his education had fallen, were somewhat undecided as to the talents

* L. 322 to the end.

† "We . . . landed at Calais on the eve of the day when the King was to swear fidelity to the new constitution."—*Autobiog. Mem.*

themselves. The seeds were slow to flower, and ripened out of sight. Articulation waited on maturity of thought. Until November 1791, he drifted aimlessly about, in London for the most part, or with Robert Jones in Denbighshire, taking walks and attempting poems. Throughout these months the persistent problem of self prevented the self-forgetfulness which is in London's keeping, and *Prelude* vii., despite its conclusion, and despite its vindication in the "Retrospect" of viii., gives no exalted view of Wordsworth's "Residence in London." Winter found him in France, to learn the language fluently as the first step to a possible tutorship. He learnt much more than the language; he absorbed the spirit and drank the intoxicating enthusiasm of the French. At first, indeed, he had to train his emotions. He passed through Paris with more care, as he says, for "the painted Magdalen of Lebrun"; he sojourned in Orleans with more liking for "the formal haunts of men," polished in society and arts, than for the noise and notions of the revolutionaries. This indifference was not without its apology. Not only was the first storm already overblown, but Wordsworth's interest in politics was in an academic rather than an active order. Moreover, as well from the traditions of the countryside as from the habit of undergraduate life, the revolution of power from king to commons struck on his sympathies with no sense of the extraordinary.

But at Blois, in the spring of 1792, mingling with the flower of Gallic soldiery, seeing the roads crowded with the chivalry of France, above all, enjoying the companionship and confidence of the Republican General, Beaupuy,* the previous suspense gave way,

* Michel Beaupuy (1755-1796, when he perished at Elz on Oct. 19) was one of five brothers, three of whom, philosophers and warriors,

> "And I gradually withdrew
> Into a noisier world, and thus ere long
> Became a patriot; and my heart was all
> Given to the people, and my love was theirs" (ix. 121).

Wordsworth's eulogy of Beaupuy, in the ninth book of *The Prelude*, is admitted on all sides to have been as just as it was discriminating. The Chartist of gentle blood, with the romance of arms about him, the poet's senior by fifteen years, his superior by a wealth of learning—for the descendants of Montaigne would not dishonour their ancestry—in walks and talks innumerable, by brilliant argument or trenchant silence, had fired his youthful disciple with the contagion of his own ideals. When they parted, on July 27, 1792, never to meet again, in place of the aimless visionary and pamphlet politician, who had seen in the first great outbreak "nothing out of nature's certain course," Beaupuy left in the young Englishman at Blois, on whom he had poured the passion and the magnanimity of his spirit, an ardent proselyte, a poet with a religion and a mission, burning to strike a blow in the cause of freedom and the people. His love was theirs, and the "joy for tens of millions" was presently interpreted according to the letter of revolutionary schemes. In the first week of September (1792) the "Massacres" took place in Paris; on the 22nd their memory was readily wiped out ("Ephemeral monsters, to be seen but once") in the proclamation of the Republic; and, early in October, Wordsworth returned to the French capital.

died in the cause of the Republic. Their father's family was noble; through their mother they were descended from Montaigne. Michel Beaupuy's career is a stainless record of heroism, humanity and faith. Cp. *Prel.* ix., 287 to 430. But Wordsworth is mistaken in the date of his hero's death. Cp. too, Le Général Michel Beaupuy, par G. Bussière et E. Legouis (Paris, 1891).

Do not let us misjudge him. At this time he was a lad of two-and-twenty, consorting at that most impressionable age with the leading men in the grandest drama that the stage of Europe has seen. By every instinct of character and upbringing he was disposed to accept the cry of equality as the key to perfection. More than this, he was already convinced, by a degree of intimacy with nature and an insight into her spiritual unity granted to few, that some great work was awaiting his doing, and he had lacked, during the trying transition years, the wisdom of home influence to temper the egotism of youth. What wonder that, in this mood of fire, he had heard "a voice that cried to the whole city, 'Sleep no more'"; he had prayed that the four corners of the earth might send their succours to France; he had evoked the precedent of Harmodius and Aristogiton to prove "that tyrannic power is weak," and in their example would have thrown himself into the arms of the Girondists, and have followed their fate to the scaffold.* His uncles took alarm. To them he was only a somewhat unsatisfactory charge, sent abroad to study French, and no doubt exceeding his commands. In December, to the benefit of English literature, his supplies were stopped, and he was forced to return to London.

More years of tribulation succeeded. Shortly after his home-coming, and to avert the displeasure of his relatives, he published, through Johnson, in St Paul's Churchyard, two slim quarto volumes of verse, *An Evening Walk* and the *Descriptive Sketches*. The former was addressed to his sister, and had been written at school and college. The latter was a memorial of his Swiss tour with Jones, was dedicated to him in his new style of Reverend, and had been composed during

1793-5.

* ix. 48-236.

the previous year. Both were issued, as Wordsworth said in one of his letters, "with great reluctance. . . . But as I had done nothing at the University, I thought these little things might show that I *could* do something." They showed little more than a liking for the imitators of Pope, and their author shared his sister's regret "that he did not submit the works to the inspection of some friend before their publication." But in truth, Wordsworth at this time was but little concerned for the success or failure of his poems. The *Sketches* closed with a clamorous invocation of France as the bulwark of liberty in Europe, and Wordsworth settled for awhile in London to follow the fortunes of that movement.

It went ill. In January, Louis XVI. was killed, and the Reign of Terror presently began. The promise of liberty was fulfilled in the licence of crime. Nay, more. It issued, by the inexorable irony of events, in the very oppression of liberty, when, by the ambition of Napoleon Buonaparte, "Frenchmen had changed a war of self-defence for one of conquest" (xi. 207). This came later; but already, leading opinion in England, converted, in despite of violent opposition, by the eloquence of Edmund Burke, was condemning the excesses while it feared the example of the Revolution. And Wordsworth, torn between his strength of principle on the side of Beaupuy, and his strength of sorrow for the Girondist victims, the women among whom were permitted that last and only privilege of freedom, held, too, by native loyalty to England, saw her join the coalition against France with feelings of deepest anguish. He even rejoiced, he tells us, when his countrymen were killed; and he sate silent when the churches prayed for victory. He has

set on paper a passionate statement of his then convictions, in the form of *A Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff on the Extraordinary Avowal of his Political Principles, contained in the Appendix to his late Sermon: by a Republican*,—nowhere dated, and never voluntarily published, but belonging undoubtedly to 1793.* In this pamphlet, Wordsworth's new-born Republicanism stands plainly confessed. He deprecates, as "an idle cry of modish lamentation," the horror of regicide which Louis' death provoked. He glozes over the terrible abuses of the name of liberty, as the inevitable development of political virtues "at the expense of moral ones." He defends the forceful stripping of the clergy as "the right of the Nation over ecclesiastical wealth." Next, proceeding to principles, Wordsworth eloquently arrays for episcopal inspection the well-known *à priori* arguments against monarchy. And, in conclusion to this fiery piece of special pleading, he addresses Bishop Watson in the following terms: "In some parts of England it is quaintly said, when a drunken man is seen reeling towards his home, that he has business on both sides of the road. Observing your Lordship's tortuous path, the spectators will be far from insinuating that you have partaken of Mr Burke's intoxicating bowl; they will content themselves, shaking their heads as you stagger along, with remarking that you have business on both sides of the road." The Bishop, as we have seen, was never confronted with this "superannuated schoolboy's" manifesto; and its chief interest for posterity, apart from its testimony to Wordsworth's ardour, lies in reconciling its principles with those of his later life. It is no great

* It first appeared, from the author's MS., as "An Apology for the French Revolution," in Wordsworth's *Prose Works*, edited by Grosart, Volume I.

feat. The events in France in 1789 were the starting-point of two branching movements. The first was a reactionary revolution against the existing order of society. This cause Wordsworth espoused only to abandon it; for it drifted away from the promise of its origin to a reign of oppression in Sweden and Switzerland, of blood-thirst and of Napoleon at home. The second was a movement towards a Tory democracy, based on the rights of man. For, though public sympathy was swiftly alienated from the methods of the French, the Revolution served its purpose in establishing beyond the possibility of doubt the great social change that had gradually taken place. Equality has always been a golden dream; but it has never been nearer to permanent realisation than in the Athenian democracy of Pericles. To that Greek summer of a hundred years belonged man's highest intellectual activity, his most secure liberty, his directest participation in the government of the State. But this success, as moral philosophers have pointed out, depended on artificial conditions. It depended on the jealous separateness of the Greek communities, on the traditional slavery of the so-called "masses." These barriers broken, the democracy of Pericles is revealed as a system of protection and privilege. It was the supreme merit of the French Revolution to universalise the conception of equality, and to establish, upon that basis, a genuine theory of freedom; to take up the burden of the social problems from which the Greeks had secured exemption, and to sacrifice for awhile the special advantages in intellect and pleasure which that exemption had permitted. From this moral and political level civilised Europe could never again go back, for the

conscience of the world has developed beyond the Greek.* But that the requirements of a social discovery of these dimensions could instantly be met by violent legislative reform was the fatal error of 1789. Laws correspond to national habits, and unless grounded on habit they are fruitful only of lawlessness; and the peoples of Europe were not yet trained to accept the burden and the boon of their inheritance. They had been disinherited for so long. The joy of political liberty, of philosophical consolation, of poetic diction, had been reserved for the favoured few, and this triple bar of exclusiveness had reached its rigidest during the eighteenth century. It was Wordsworth's mission to attack it at all three points. From the common principle of life throughout creation he was led to infer the common right to freedom for all created things, — "when joy of one is joy for tens of millions." From the primary passions and intuitions of the humblest ranks of society he constructed a more liberal and universal philosophy than the tainted materialism of eighteenth century schools. In the vernacular of daily use he wrote more genuine poetry than was ever dreamed of by the imitators of Pope.

Before going further, I would call your attention to three aspects of this subject. *In the first place*, I am not exaggerating the force of the changes which Wordsworth introduced. In his access of democratic zeal, he enfranchised the very flowers that blow: "And 'tis my faith that every flower enjoys the air it breathes." In his philosophic reaction he made the illiterate, the half-witted and the children more potent media of philosophic truth than all the princes of intellect; while, in his democratisation of

* Cp. with this section the late Professor Green's *Prolegomena to Ethics*, book iv.

poetic diction, a conscious part of his democratic scheme, I need hardly remind you to what lengths he went. The ancient parody still serves to point the ridicule of his efforts:

> "My father's walls are made of brick,
> But not so tall, and not so thick
> As these; and, goodness me!
> My father's beams are made of wood,
> But never, never half so good
> As those that now I see."

Secondly, while it is easy for us, at this interval of a hundred years, to distinguish the good from the bad in the influence of the French Revolution, it would be idle to deny to Wordsworth the merit and the labour of his achievement. As he went through Paris in '91 he has recorded,

> "Where silent zephyrs sported with the dust
> Of the Bastile, I sate in the open sun,
> And from the rubbish gathered up a stone,
> And pocketed the relic" (ix. 67).

Literally, then, and figuratively, he fulfilled the vision of the prophet: "Go through, go through the gates, prepare ye the way of the people. Cast up, cast up the highway, gather out the stones: lift up a standard for the people." As Wordsworth had gathered out the stone, so he prepared the way—"My heart was all given to the People, and my love was theirs." I am not concerned to draw out at length the gradual process of restoration, the gradual repair of his imagination and taste, shattered as they had been by his disillusion in France. Rudely awakened though Wordsworth was by England's mistrust and the misdeeds of the French, he sank only momentarily into bitterness and despair. Presently, the poet's sensibility to nature's healing powers, his observation of her equable

design, and the mental reaction from human weakness and mistakes, combined to correct that mood. This struggle for the right inductions in the maze of his experience Wordsworth described in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth Books of *The Prelude*. There they remain for all time, the unique and stimulating record of a philosophic triumph won in the very midst of sensation. I would rather call attention to the grandeur of the victory; for it was no small thing that a young man, dependent on uncongenial relations, whose intellect, moreover, was hardly awake to life, should have wrung these patient lessons from the turmoil and confusion of a stupendous political conflagration. Shelley, who died in 1822, counted Wordsworth's victory a desertion; and Browning, writing in youth, took Wordsworth for model in his poem *The Lost Leader*. But Shelley perished ineffective, and Browning lived to repent; for time, in its dealings with the French Revolution, has made Wordsworthians of us all. *Thirdly*, I would remind you how Tennyson continued Wordsworth's message. It is not without symbolical significance that, in 1850, Alfred Tennyson received "This laurel, greener from the brows of him that uttered nothing base," for, despite their objective differences, Wordsworth and Tennyson wrote successively the poetry of the nineteenth century in England. Take the *Idylls of the King*, for instance, which point, as Mr Stopford Brooke expresses it, "the complete breaking-down in practice of the theory of the heaven-born ruler"; or take the symbol of the brand, Excalibur, the King's not the People's power, whether secular or sacred, returning whence it came; take *Aylmer's Field*, and *Lady Clara Vere de Vere*, both directed at the abuse of privilege against which Wordsworth had lifted up his voice,—"Alas! what differs

more than man from man, and whence that difference, if not from himself?" — take the many occasions when Tennyson followed Wordsworth to the lives and passions of the poor, in *Dora*, *The May-Queen*, *Enoch Arden*, *The Brook*, *The Promise of May*, and others; or take, summarily, if not finally, the poem of *Œnone*, where the democratic idea of the nineteenth century speaks in parables by the lips of Pallas, and the essential similarity will be apparent. It is outside the scope of our context to enforce the likeness further; but for the right understanding of Wordsworth's life in these years, his posthumous influence must be taken into account. For the spark that burns and dies, is the brilliancy of intellect alone; moral genius spreads.

The summer of 1793 Wordsworth had spent in the Isle of Wight with his friend, William Calvert, as well as in a short walking tour to Wales through Bath, Bristol and Tintern. He crossed Salisbury Plain on foot alone, a prey to melancholy thoughts which were the inspiration of *The Vagrant's Tale*. Early in 1794 the poet had been with his sister, wandering in Yorkshire, and visiting the Speddings at Keswick. In the spring he had stayed with his uncle, Richard Wordsworth, at Whitehaven; in June he had been busy with his prospectus of a new monthly miscellany, *The Philanthropist*. Its politics were to be republican, but not revolutionary, and Wordsworth was to have undertaken its landscape-gardening columns as well as other work. The scheme fell through; but in the autumn of that year the poet was still talking of going to London as a journalist. His sense of relief at Robespierre's death on July 28th marked the turning-point of his opinions. Nevertheless, the return to London was postponed through the illness of Raisley Calvert (William's

brother), whom Wordsworth stayed to nurse in Penrith. The invalid died in the following January, 1795, and—with a romantic sense of the appropriate for which his memory will never die—left to his brother's friend the sum of £900. "Hence," wrote Wordsworth, eleven years later, in a fine sonnet, *To the Memory of Raisley Calvert:*

> "Hence, if in freedom I have loved the truth;
> If there be ought of pure, or good, or great
> In my past verse; or shall be, in the lays
> Of higher mood, which now I meditate;—
> It gladdens me, O worthy, short-lived Youth!
> To think how much of this will be thy praise."

For, with 1795, a new, quiet era in the poet's life begins.

Dorothy Wordsworth.

He and Dorothy started housekeeping together, the great joy of the "together" atoning for the deficiencies of the housekeeping. It was on a very frugal basis that the tiny household opened at Racedown, Dorsetshire, in the autumn.* To eke out their income they took two boarding-pupils—a little cousin, the daughter of Mr Tom Myers, and Basil, son of Basil Montagu, Q.C. To the September of this year, too, despite the doubt upon the subject, belongs in all probability the first meeting between Wordsworth and Coleridge; they did not meet again until the following autumn.† At any rate, we have to reckon about this time with two new influences in Wordsworth's life—his sister and his friend.

Of Dorothy first. The story of this brother and sister friendship is a long familiar tale. How she was less exacting than a wife, and more companionable than a secretary, yet combined some functions of both; how, in her Journals

* They lived, probably rent free, in a cottage half way between Lyme and Crewkerne, in Somerset.

† Most of the uncertainty arose from Cottle, the publisher's, habit of garbling his own and his clients' correspondence.

and Diaries, is contained the nucleus of much of his poetry; how, in a sense, hers was the more masculine mind, so that many of the adventures which he relates in his own name were really of her experience, even to the incident of a baker's assault in Hamburg in 1798; how she sank her personality in his, and he accepted the willing sacrifice; all this is the commonplace of biography. It is rather to the reverse of the shield that attention is beginning to be attracted; to the effect of these conditions upon Dorothy herself, to their possible effect upon William. To be married to a genius has not always proved an enviable fate; but to be his sister, housekeeper and friend is a position lacking the mutuality of marriage. There can be no doubt that Dorothy Wordsworth often felt the strain. As early as 1800 she writes, under date 20th May, "The quietness and still seclusion of the valley affected me even to producing the deepest melancholy. I forced myself from it." Two years later, in March 1802, we find her recording, "I was tired to death, and went to bed before him. He came down to me, and read the poem to me in bed." It was a moment in which the loveliest of his poems, nay, the "he" himself, must have been a trifle trying; yet, doubtless, she raised herself on her pillow and supplied the admiration called for. Certainly, in 1835, her elasticity gave way; and from that year to 1856, when Dorothy Wordsworth died at the age of eighty-four, she was a confirmed mental invalid. Under different circumstances she might have been a poet herself; she might have been a happy wife and mother; and something of indirect responsibility for her early melancholia must be laid to Wordsworth's charge. And, looking at the situation in the light of the poet's life, some abatement must be made from its pleasingness. Professor Knight, in this context, speaks of his "self-involution,"

and the term may stand to express the possible harm that was done by allowing Wordsworth's plausible vanity a constant source of nourishment. But, all deductions admitted, still the facts remain. Dorothy chose, and found, and kept her vocation in life, and it does not bind one to optimistic fatalism to feel that it was for the best; and her brother's splendid genius matured most readily on this prepared soil: it would be idle to point out its shortcomings.

S. T. Coleridge.

The flattery of Coleridge was yet more pronounced. In the fourth chapter of *Biographia Literaria* we read, "During the last year of my residence at Cambridge, 1794, I became acquainted with Mr Wordsworth's first publication, entitled *Descriptive Sketches*, and seldom, if ever, was the emergence of an original poetic genius above the literary horizon more evidently announced."

Such critical discrimination is entirely to Coleridge's credit, but the remark of 1797, *à propos* of the tragedy, *The Borderers*, "in Wordsworth there are no inequalities"; or the letter to William Godwin, of March 25th, 1801,—"if I die, and the booksellers will give you anything for my life, be sure to say—'Wordsworth descended on him like the Γνῶθι σεαυτόν from heaven; by showing to him what true poetry was, he made him know that he himself was no Poet,'"—these were the product of a more extravagant mood. I am constrained to admit that, all evidence weighed, the friendship was a little one-sided. Coleridge, Wordworth's junior by two years, was somewhat embarrassing in his intimacy. His intemperate habits and unkempt appearance became, after a while, a thorn in Dorothy's flesh, and we can watch the growing struggle between her first enthusiastic impressions, derived mainly, no doubt, from Coleridge's open appreciation of her brother, and her later reluctance to encourage his visits. Even in the

German journey, to which we shall presently come, though the two set out together, Coleridge soon diverged. Nor was Wordsworth ever quite so frankly loyal in the largess of praise as Coleridge had been to him. It is true that to Coleridge *The Prelude* was inscribed, and that his name was associated with the poem throughout. But this proof of friendship was a more formal affair than the warmth and heartiness on the other side. It rests on a different plane from the private professions and intimate confessions of which Coleridge disburdened himself. And here, perhaps, with this suggestion of formality, with the probable intrusion of the feminine element, and with our sense of Wordworth's self-involved horizon, we may leave the matter. At least, in 1810, the estrangement came to a head. It was hastened by one of those untoward incidents from which there is no way out, which depend on a tone of voice, on a turn of a phrase, on a shade of ambiguity in meaning. Wordsworth said something to Basil Montagu, perhaps in all kindness and goodwill, which Montagu indiscreetly repeated to Coleridge, and the latter resented as an unfriendly imputation of unsociable morals and manners. The quarrel lasted for two years, when it was patched up by Crabb Robinson's intervention, and the close comrades of olden days were outwardly reconciled, never to be the same again.

Alfoxden, 1797-8.

The friendship was at its height in the last years of the century. Wordsworth had spent eighteen months at Racedown, occupied with his pupils and books. The composition of *The Borderers* belongs to this period, though its publication was very long delayed. In June 1797, Coleridge was the Wordsworths' guest. He had just written, in the new school of romantic drama, *Osorio; or, The Remorse,* and the two poets, who

were to share in common the fate of rejection for the stage, now read and admired one another's plays, in a spirit of mutual self-satisfaction. On July 2nd, hosts and guest exchanged their parts, and a fortnight later the Wordsworths settled at Alfoxden, in the Quantocks, in order to be close to Coleridge's home at Nether Stowey. At either household various kindred souls were welcome. Coleridge, it is true, who depended for his living on journalism and lecturing, was at this time impecunious, and the burden of his Bohemian hospitality must have fallen heavily on his wife. One day, when they were to have lunched royally on bread and cheese and brandy, the cheese was stolen, and the brandy spilt, and the cupboard was bare of salt. But the salt of conversation supplied the pauses of the commissariat, and Thomas Poole, their wealthy neighbour in the castle, was always ready and at hand. A frequent visitor was Charles Lloyd, son of a Quaker banker in Birmingham, a youth of weak health and vapid enthusiasms, whom Coleridge had attracted in his pantisocratic days. William Hazlitt came there too, and found in the poems of the friends "something of the effect that arises from the turning-up of the fresh soil, or the first welcome breath of spring." *

Henry Crabb Robinson came; and Charles Lamb, Coleridge's school-fellow, shortly after his domestic tragedy, repaired at Stowey the affliction of his spirits. His visit, and the seeds of future pleasure that it sowed, were a ray of sunshine in his darkened life. Southey, Mrs Coleridge's brother-in-law, and a comrade in the emigration day-dream, was a member of the circle; De Quincey made acquaintance with it; and Joseph Cottle, the Bristol publisher, was drawn into it, to be persuaded into thinking that he would

* See *The Liberal*, vol. ii. p. 371.

make his fortune by launching the young poets. Politics, tinged with republicanism, and literature, wedded to reaction, were the constant topics of talk. Its brilliancy was reinforced by the presence of John Thelwall, "Citizen Thelwall," Radical and Chartist, who had retired from active propagandism to cultivate his acres and the domestic virtues. His visit, the unconventional habits of the households, and the suspicious chatter of inquisitive rustics, brought down a Government spy, with the result that at the end of their year's tenancy, the renewal of the Wordsworths' lease was refused, and in July 1798, the gathering in the Quantocks was broken up.

It is unnecessary to protest the perfect innocence of "the conspirators." Indeed, the industry of Wordsworth, during his residence at Alfoxden, is the chief feature in their proceedings. In a letter of March 11th, 1798, he wrote that he had begun "a poem which I hope to make of considerable utility. Its title will be 'The Recluse, or Views of Man, Nature and Society.'" A few weeks later, on April 20th, a start was made with *Peter Bell*; but the great work of the year was the first volume of *Lyrical Ballads.** Since Wordsworth and Coleridge met almost every day, to discuss the theory and practice of poetics, it was natural that they should think of publishing a book in common. Moreover, their common pecuniary necessities served to recommend the scheme. On a November day, in 1797, Coleridge had been seized with the inspiration of the *Ancient Mariner*; Wordsworth supplied some lines, and it formed accordingly the nucleus of the collection. Coleridge was to continue in a similar vein, giving "to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic, . . . a human interest and a semblance

* *Lyrical Ballads, with a few other Poems.* J. Cottle, Bristol, and J. & A. Arch, London, 1798.

of truth"; Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to reverse the process, and "to give a charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us" (*Biog. Lit.*). By the following spring, Wordsworth's output was far in excess of his collaborator's, and when the anonymous volume was published by Cottle, in September 1798, it contained only four poems by Coleridge,—*The Ancient Mariner*, *The Foster-Mother's Tale*, *The Nightingale* and *The Dungeon*. Wordsworth's contributions included *The Idiot Boy*, *We are Seven*, *The Thorn*, *Anecdote for Fathers*, *Goody Blake and Harry Gill*, "*Her Eyes are Wild*," *Simon Lee*, *Lines written in Early Spring*, *Expostulation and Reply*, and others. Coleridge's *Dungeon* and *A Character* by Wordsworth were subsequently omitted. Meanwhile, in July, Wordsworth and his sister had left Alfoxden to walk to Tintern Abbey up the Wye. The poet had traversed the same country with William Calvert in 1793, and his present revised impressions were the occasion of his magnificent *Lines, Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey*, ('Five years have past,'—) which were sent straight to Bristol, and were included in the *Lyrical Ballads*.

1798-9. With the proceeds of their various enterprises, Coleridge and the Wordsworths started to spend the winter in Germany. They were received in audience by the poet Klopstock, by whom they were considerably overawed; but beyond him they seem to have seen hardly anyone. They arrived in October at Goslar, where Coleridge parted company with the sister and brother in order to have more time for study. The weather, Wordsworth complains, was bitterly cold; he

found his neighbours ungenial; and, thwarted, to some extent, in his social purposes, he gave most of his time to writing. *Lucy Gray*, and *Ruth*, and *The Poet's Epitaph* belong in composition to these months, as well as the verses to *Lucy*, and the unspoken romance that inspired them. He was further engaged with elaborating his scheme for *The Recluse*; and, while taking stock of his faculties in this regard, he began his auto-psychological poem, afterwards entitled *The Prelude*, which was finished in 1805, but only posthumously published. At Göttingen, in February, the Wordsworths fell in with Coleridge again, and returned to England in the spring. For the rest of that year, 1799, they made Sockburn, near Northallerton, in Yorkshire, their head-quarters, where they stayed with Thomas Hutchinson and his sisters, Sarah and Mary.

Settlement in the Lake District.

The record of the poet's life becomes more and more tranquil. It becomes, in W. M. Rossetti's phrase, more and more respectable.* On St Thomas' Day, December 21st, 1799, he settled with his sister in Dove Cottage, Town-end, Grasmere, a lovely retreat in that favourite Lake district to which he afterwards wrote a Guide, and to which he was faithful in preference till the end. During 1800 they entertained several visitors, John, their sailor brother, and Mary Hutchinson, and Coleridge among them. In July, the Coleridges took Greta Hall, a house twelve miles from Dove Cottage, and the intercourse again became frequent. A second series of *Lyrical Ballads* was discussed; but when in January 1801,† Longman & Rees (London), who

* The charge of "respectability" with its somewhat *bourgeois* implication was made by Rossetti in his Preface to one edition of Moxon's complete *Wordsworth*, a Preface subsequently withdrawn at the earnest request of Wordsworth's surviving relatives.

† The date on the title-page is 1800.

had bought out Cottle, published the Ballads in two volumes, Wordsworth's name appeared on the title-page, and Wordsworth's lengthy Preface explained and justified the purpose of the poems. Volume I. was a new edition of the 1798 publication, with *Love* by Coleridge added; volume II. contained Wordsworth's Goslar pieces and others of yet more recent date, the chief of which were the two pastoral idylls, *Michael* and *The Brothers*; *The Oak and the Broom*, "*'Tis said that some have died of love*," *The Waterfall and the Eglantine*, etc.; as well as five poems *On the Naming of Places*, one of which was inscribed to M(ary) H(utchinson). A piece of more material good fortune this year, was a windfall of £8500, paid, in complete liquidation—of capital and interest—of a sum of money borrowed by Lord Lonsdale from his agent, John Wordsworth, by Lord Lonsdale's successor to John Wordsworth's children. It came at a most appropriate time, for the poet had been wearing himself out with work, and was thinking of taking seriously to the study of chemistry, with Calvert and Coleridge, as a relaxation from the strain of composition. By way of compromise, apparently, Wordsworth got married; for, in the whole biography of the poet, in nothing was he less like other men than in his wooing and his wedding. It is said that Dorothy had to write his love-letters: certainly, after the ceremony, on October 4th, 1802, she accompanied the pair on their honeymoon. The account of that day in Dorothy's diary, is curious. The trio stayed for an hour or two at Kirby, in Yorkshire, where her brother and she entertained themselves with examining children's grave-stones; later in the afternoon they caught sight of Rivaux Abbey, and Dorothy records, with a delicious touch of pity, "Dear Mary"—(for Mary Hutchinson, their old school-fellow, was the bride)—"had

never seen a ruined abbey before—except Whitby." That they arrived at their destination very late at night, and left by six in the morning, was an appropriate ending to the day.

Mary Wordsworth soon settled down to the long life *à trois* which centred about the poet. In the *Autobiographical Memoranda*, dictated at Rydal Mount in 1847, the events of the next forty years are very shortly summarised: "After our marriage we dwelt, together with our sister, at Town-end, where three of our children were born. In the spring of 1808, the increase of our family caused us to remove to a larger house, then just built, Allan Bank, in the same vale; where our two younger children were born, and who died at the Rectory, the house we afterwards occupied for two years. They died in 1812, and in 1813 we came to Rydal Mount, where we have since lived with no further sorrow till 1836, when my sister became a confirmed invalid, and our sister Sarah Hutchinson died."

Travels.

It will not be disrespectful to this reticence to fill in a few more details of Wordsworth's private life. Its seeming monotony was broken, in the first place, by occasional journeys abroad. In the summer after his marriage (1803), Wordsworth started with his sister and Coleridge on a Scotch tour, upon which Dorothy wrote a small volume of *Recollections*, which have been published. Mrs Wordsworth was unable to accompany them on this occasion, for her eldest son, John, had been born on June 18th; while of Coleridge, Wordsworth writes in a note to one of his own *Memorials* of the tour, "Poor C. was at that time in bad spirits, and somewhat too much in love with his own dejection, and he departed from us soon after we left Loch Lomond." The chief incident noted in Miss Wordsworth's Journal was the meeting with Walter

Scott at Melrose, in whose company they spent four days, from 19th to 23rd September. In a letter to Scott, dated from Grasmere, nearly a month later, to announce their safe return, Wordsworth freely expressed his pleasure: "My sister and I often talk of the happy days we spent in your company. Such things do not occur often in life. If we live, we shall meet again; that is my consolation when I think of these things. . . . Farewell! . . . Your sincere friend, for such I will call myself, though slow to use a word of such solemn meaning to anyone."

In October 1806, by the invitation and generosity of Sir George Beaumont, the Wordsworths and their family spent the winter at a farm-house in Coleorton, Leicestershire, where the poet employed himself with laying out grounds and planting a winter garden at the Hall for Lady Beaumont. A sonnet to her upon the subject is among his *Miscellaneous Sonnets.* Goethe, oddly enough, was occupied at the same time in the same congenial manner at Weimar.* It was probably late in the following summer that Wordsworth paid his visit to the Craven district of Yorkshire, with the scenery of which his *White Doe of Rylstone* is associated.

In 1814 came another tour in Scotland, this time in the company of Mrs Wordsworth and Miss Hutchinson. It was chiefly remarkable for the poem *Yarrow Visited*, which contrasted with the *Yarrow Unvisited* of nine years before. In 1831, *Yarrow Revisited* was added to the collection, on the occasion of a third Scottish journey, the immediate reason for which recalled the circumstances of 1803. As it was then that Wordsworth and Scott first met, so it was now that, in 1831, Wordsworth set off with his daughter to visit Sir Walter before he left for Italy. "How sadly

* See Frau Gothein's *Wordsworth*, i. 184.

changed," runs the poet's note, "did I find him from the man I had seen so healthy, gay and hopeful. . . . On Tuesday morning, Sir Walter Scott accompanied us, and most of the party, to Newark Castle, on the Yarrow. When we alighted from the carriages, he walked pretty stoutly, and had great pleasure in revisiting these his favourite haunts. Of that excursion, the verses *Yarrow Revisited* are a memorial. Notwithstanding the romance that pervades Sir Walter's works, and attaches to many of his habits, there is too much pressure of fact for these verses to harmonise, as much as I could wish, with the two preceding poems. On our return in the afternoon, we had to cross the Tweed, directly opposite Abbotsford. . . . A rich, but sad light, of rather a purple than a golden hue, was spread over the Eildon hills at that moment; and thinking it probable that it might be the last time Sir Walter would cross the stream, I was not a little moved, and expressed some of my feelings in the sonnet beginning, 'A trouble, not of clouds,' etc."

Two days later, after "a serious conversation, *tête-à-tête*," Wordsworth and Scott parted; as is well known, the forebodings were fulfilled, and Sir Walter hurried back from Italy to die in 1832. I give the sonnet referred to in this note at length: it was read by Scott before his departure:

"A trouble, not of clouds, or weeping rain,
  Nor of the setting sun's pathetic light
  Engendered, hangs o'er Eildon's triple height:
Spirits of Power, assembled there, complain
  For kindred Power, departing from their sight;
While Tweed, best pleased in chanting a blithe strain,
Saddens his voice again, and yet again.
  Lift up your hearts, ye Mourners! for the might
Of the whole world's good wishes with him goes;

Blessings and prayers, in nobler retinue
Than sceptred king or laurelled conqueror knows,
Follow this wondrous Potentate. Be true,
Ye winds of ocean, and the midland sea,
Wafting your charge to soft Parthenope!"

Meanwhile, in 1820, Wordsworth had visited the Continent with his wife and sister. Mr Monkhouse went with them to the Alps and to Milan, while Henry Crabb Robinson joined them at Lucerne. They finished up at Paris where they spent five weeks in the company of Mrs Monkhouse and a Miss Horrocks. In 1828 he was in Belgium with Coleridge, in 1829 in Ireland. In 1833, came a kind of supplementary journey to the Abbotsford pilgrimage of two years before, in order to visit Staffa and Iona, which had then been necessarily omitted owing to the lateness of the season. Finally, in March 1837, a life-long wish of Wordsworth's was gratified by a tour among the cities of Italy. "I received," he records, "from Mr Moxon, the publisher of a large edition of my poems, a sum sufficient to enable me to gratify my wish without encroaching upon what I considered due to my family." Accordingly, he set off with H. C. Robinson, and the friends remained abroad until the following August. His poetic *Memorials* of this occasion Wordsworth considered inadequate; he would have liked to dwell on his enthusiasm for the Roman remains, as well as on the Petrarch associations, —"Between two and three hours did I run about, climbing the steep and rugged crags, from whose base the water of Vaucluse breaks forth. 'Has Laura's lover,' often said I to myself, 'ever sat upon this stone? Or has his foot ever pressed that turf?' Some, especially of the female sex, could have felt sure of it; my answer was (impute it to my years), 'I fear, not.' Is it not in fact obvious that many

of his love verses must have flowed, I do not say from a wish to display his own talent, but from a habit of exercising his intellect in that way, rather than from an impulse of his heart?" From this date the tranquil residence at Rydal Mount was practically uninterrupted.

Friendships.

Incidentally, something has already been said of Wordsworth's losses and gains by friendship during his long life. We must revert to 1805 for almost the greatest sorrow which he suffered. On February 11th in that year, the cottage at Town-end was turned into a house of mourning by the news of the foundering of the East Indiaman, *Earl of Abergavenny*, of which John Wordsworth, the youngest and the favourite of the brothers, was Captain at the time. Evidence seemed to show that the loss of the ship was due to the pilot's mismanagement, while the heroism of the Captain's death was placed beyond a doubt. In this thought there was some consolation; but in many poems and letters, both presently and in after years, Wordsworth's deep grief was evinced. John, he had always felt, was the most sympathetic of his brothers in temperament: "Of all human beings," he wrote in a kind of necrologe to Sir George Beaumont, "of all human beings whom I ever knew, he was the man of the most rational desires, the most sedate habits, and the most perfect self-command." His death added the discipline of sorrow to the poet's experience of life.

The friendship with Sir George Beaumont, to whom Wordsworth had turned in his hour of bereavement, dated from two years before. It had been brought about by the good offices of Coleridge, and it grew in intimacy and mutual esteem until Beaumont's death in 1827. Sir George was a descendant of Francis Beaumont, the dramatist, and had inherited or acquired his ancestor's taste for culture. To

the men of talent of his times he acted the part of a Mæcenas, with more of the connoisseur and less of the patron about him. Wilkie and Landseer, Coleridge and Scott, Southey, who called him the most fortunate of men, and Byron, who came to sneer, gathered at his house; Haydon and the veteran Sir Joshua were often to be met there. Beaumont was a painter himself, and Wordsworth's lines on his "Picture of Peele Castle in a Storm" are among his most happily inspired. Another taste which they had in common was for landscape-gardening, and the poet's operations at Sir George's country house in Coleorton led to a long interchange of letters. He completed his task by composing suitable inscriptions for various points of interest in the grounds.

Besides the acquaintances to whom Sir George Beaumont introduced him, Wordsworth, when in London in 1820, at the height of his reputation, met many distinguished men. One evening, of which Lamb records that he supped in Parnassus, there were assembled round Crabb Robinson's table in Gloucester Place five immortals, —Wordsworth, Coleridge, Lamb, Thomas Moore, and Samuel Rogers. He knew, too, and sustained in various degrees as associates or correspondents, Carlyle, Haydon, Hazlitt, De Quincey, John Wilson, Thomas Arnold, Rowan Hamilton, Maria Edgeworth, Aubrey de Vere, and Sir Humphrey Davy; but he was really not intimate with any. Scott died in 1832, Coleridge in 1834, and Southey in 1843. To the two former sufficient reference has perhaps been made; death is always a great tranquilliser, and Coleridge's death came as a heavy blow to the surviving friend: their early sympathy stood out in more bold relief than the later differences which had divided them.

But with increasing age, and after the loss of Beaumont,

Wordsworth retired more and more into his own family circle. Dora, his daughter, took the place of the sister Dorothy of his youth, and Edward Quillinan, her husband, became his friend as well as his son-in-law. Dora's death in 1847 was a grief from which he did not recover. And here, perhaps, with the last of his friends, is the most fitting place to take leave of the poet. He had never been a sociable man, though the list of his acquaintances is so long; he had never been a man of easy intercourse, as the Coleridge story may stand, among other testimony, to witness. But his could have been no ordinary attraction which basked in the devotion of a sister, wife and daughter; nor is there any misprisal of love in his relations to John Wordsworth and George Beaumont. He liked best, as he has told us, to sit by his own hearth-fire,

> "And listen to the flapping of the flame,
> Or kettle whispering its faint under-song."

At home then, amid the peace that this aspiration typifies, on April 23rd, 1850, the aged poet died. He is buried in Grasmere churchyard, within the sound of Rotha's waters.

Publications.

After the close of the *Wanderjahre*, and the settlement in the Lake district, Wordsworth's biographer has little concern with the domestic life of his subject. It remains for him to enumerate the works which Wordsworth published, and to follow the course of his growing appreciation as a poet. And this distinction is the more essential, because Wordsworth himself sharply divided off his private from his public career. "On the basis of his human life he reared a poetic one," as he wrote of Robert Burns; and this poetic structure was designed to be viewed as a whole. The very order of publication

corresponds to this design, and supersedes the order of composition. Wordsworth was writing nearly every day, —writing or revising—but his poetic life is most faithfully related by pursuing the history of his published works.

I left this part of our subject with the appearance, in 1800-1, of the new volume of *Lyrical Ballads* and the famous *Preface* on the Principles of Poetry with which Wordsworth chose to introduce it. The contrast between the extreme triviality of certain of the *Ballads* and the seriousness of purpose to which the *Preface* laid claim, made the next experiment of the young poet an object of amused anticipation. In 1807, Messrs Longman issued "Poems, in two volumes, by William Wordsworth, author of the Lyrical Ballads." Their chief contents include some of the best of the poet's productions. They contained many of the sonnets subsequently "dedicated to National Independence and Liberty,"—among them *On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic*, *To Toussaint l'Ouverture*, *The King of Sweden*, and the series written in August and September 1802, in a vein of passionate patriotism. They contained further some of the "Miscellaneous Sonnets,"—*Westminster Bridge*, "It is a beauteous evening," and *After a Journey across the Hamilton* (*Hambleton*) *Hills*. They contained the three sets of stanzas, *To the Daisy*; the *Elegiac Stanzas, suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle in a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont*; and the *Character of the Happy Warrior*. Had Wordsworth ceased writing in this year the verdict of posterity would still have crowned him poet for the wonderful achievement of these volumes. Nevertheless, they were made the occasion of the first of the *Edinburgh Review* attacks. In an article of October 1807, the *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*, a poem which has since won almost extravagant admiration, was

characterised in that periodical as "the most illegible and unintelligible part of the publication"; while the Reviewer concluded with the ungrateful hope, "that there is now an end of this folly."

Happily, the poet was undeterred by the perversity of a blind generation. He measured his obstinacy with theirs, and followed up his two volumes of miscellaneous verse by an instalment of his projected *magnum opus*. In 1814, there was published in a quarto volume, "The Excursion, being a portion of the Recluse, a Poem." In the scheme of the *Recluse*, the present portion was the second of three divisions. It remains a fragment,—in nine thousand lines, for of the rest of the work only Book I. of Part First was ever completed. Its immediate success was of the most meagre. The *Edinburgh*, finding its warning of seven years ago neglected, greeted the *Excursion* with the notorious review from Jeffrey's pen, beginning "This will never do." "The case of Mr Wordsworth," it continued, "is now manifestly hopeless." It is fair to add that chief exception was taken to the character of the Pedlar-Philosopher; some passages of beauty were quoted and admired, but contempt and derision were poured upon the underlying theory of all Wordsworth's work, — the existence of beauty in the common-place. The *Quarterly*, in a more temperate article written by Lamb,* begged the poet, in his own interests, to abandon his excess of naïveté; while the *Monthly Review* was yet more guarded in praise. Even Coleridge was dissatisfied; he had looked for a more definite system of philosophy, a more tangible reply to

* But edited by Gifford. Lamb complained that he did not recognise his article: in reading *The Excursion* he had spent a day in heaven.

Locke, and Pope, and the elder Darwin. The *Edinburgh* at this time carried enormous weight, and the greater is the merit due to Southey, who, in a letter to Sir Walter Scott, December 24th, 1814, wrote: "Jeffrey, I hear, has written what his admirers call a *crushing* review of *The Excursion*. He might as well seat himself upon Skiddaw, and fancy he had crushed the mountain."

Wordsworth's popularity increased very slowly. The appearance, in 1815, of his classified poems and the *Appendix* and *Essay* justifying their classification, was received with almost universal disapproval, although such pieces as *Laodamia* and the "Liberty" sonnets of 1810 were now added to the collection. *The White Doe of Rylstone*, published in the same year with an engraving after Sir George Beaumont by Bromley, was considered by the *Edinburgh Review* to be "the very worst poem we ever saw imprinted in a quarto volume." Nevertheless, out of this very article, the severity of the attack defeats itself. No unprejudiced reader of the seventh canto of that poem could acquiesce in the *Edinburgh* summary: "the poor lady runs about for some years in a very disconsolate way in a worsted gown and flannel night-cap; but at last the old white doe finds her out, and takes again to following her." Such criticism is no criticism. The *Quarterly* was respectful and appreciative; and—more significant still—in the July and December numbers, 1818, of *Blackwood's Magazine*, Wordsworth was for the first time treated as a Master as well as a Poet.

But in the following year, the growing faith of the critics was somewhat rudely tried by the two thin volumes *Peter Bell* and *The Waggoner*. The *Monthly* was unmeasured in abuse: Wordsworth was an infatuated poetaster, the Prince of Poetical Burlesque. In a later

chapter it will be shown how far Wordsworth deferred to public opinion in the corrections which he introduced into *Peter Bell;* it is sufficient to mention here, that the first two editions of that poem—and those only—contained the famous stanza,—

> "Is it a party in a parlour?
> Crammed just as they on earth were cramm'd—
> Some sipping punch, some sipping tea,
> But, as you by their faces see,
> All silent and all damn'd."

Still, with or without these lines, *Peter Bell* was a practical illustration of the new mission of poetry for which not even the *Excursion* and the *White Doe* could be considered an adequate preparation.

It was with a sense of relief that those who were most anxious for the poet's reputation welcomed the volume of 1820, "*The River Duddon*, a series of sonnets, *Vaudracour and Julia*, and other poems. To which is annexed, a topographical description of the country of the Lakes, in the north of England." Verse and prose were both on a sufficiently high level to atone for the caprice of *Peter Bell.* The *Monthly Review* was converted; or rather, it reverted to the tone of June 1799, when it had discovered much "genius and originality" in the author of *Lyrical Ballads*; and from this date, the fame of Wordsworth, both at home and abroad, has been steadily progressive. Against the last attack of the *Edinburgh* Reviewer, who wrote in November 1822, "The Lake School of Poetry, we think, is now pretty well extinct," can be set the pronouncement of *Blackwood's* in the August before: "Wordsworth is indisputably the most *original Poet of the Age.*" Both articles were *à propos* of the

volume of poetry, "Memorials of a Tour on the Continent, 1820."

By a curious fatality, the restitution of the critics came at a time when the creative energy of the poet had ceased. During all the years that the reviewers had abused him, and the public had left him unread, Wordsworth had been putting forth the work which has made him immortal. His golden decade, according to Matthew Arnold, was from 1798 to 1808; certainly the two volumes of 1807 contained some of the finest of his poems; and equally certain is it, that after 1820, when the circle of his readers first began to widen, when the reviewers began to follow *Blackwood's* lead, and wrote articles on the poet's teaching, when selections were first made from his poems "for the use of schools and young persons," the poetic fire was almost extinguished. To 1822, besides the "Memorials, etc.," just mentioned, belongs the volume of 102 "Ecclesiastical Sketches," subsequently enlarged to a sonnet sequence of 132. In the same year, the Guide to the Lakes was first issued as a separate publication, and it was still possible for the tourists who used it to ask the author if he had written anything else. Nevertheless, uniform editions of the "Poetical Works" followed one another fast, taking in the new poems as they appeared. In 1834, "Yarrow Revisited, and other Poems" was given to the world. It contained the Memorials of Wordsworth's visit to Scotland in 1831, in connection with Sir Walter Scott; a series suggested by the supplementary tour of 1833; three longish pieces of indifferent value, called *The Armenian Lady's Love*, *The Russian Fugitive*, and *The Egyptian Maid*; and some miscellaneous sonnets and memorials, besides two or three "Evening Voluntaries," the most notable of which,

Composed upon an Evening of Extraordinary Splendour and Beauty, had already been published in the *River Duddon* volume. Finally, in 1842, as the seventh volume of his collected works, Wordsworth consented to the appearance of "Poems, chiefly of Early and Late Years; including *The Borderers*, a Tragedy." The tragedy dated from 1795-6; *Guilt and Sorrow* was a new and revised version of *The Female Vagrant* of 1794, and the interest of the volume, on the whole, was biographical rather than literary.

Honours.

The course of this survey, and its conclusion in a publication which was a kind of concession to popularity, brings us imperceptibly to the point when Wordsworth had survived his early detractors, and the new generation that had grown up around the prophet, delighted to do him honour. The last decade of his public life was an ample compensation for its opening years. Outwardly, at least: for we cannot but remember that the sister, who had shared his toil, was practically unobservant of its reward; that the brother, who had been most in sympathy, and the friends, who had been loyallest in help, were dead; in a word, that, in outliving his dispraise, Wordsworth had outlived his ambition. But the tokens of esteem came thickly. Money was never a material object to the frugal poet, and in 1842, he was able to resign, in favour of his second son, the Distributorship of Stamps for Westmoreland and Cumberland, to which he had been appointed in 1813. Lord Lonsdale's interest had procured him the post; it was a curious instance of State-aid to art in the dawn of the socialist century. More direct was the interposition of the Civil List, a few months after his resignation, with an annuity of £300. But honours without emolument attached were

also forthcoming. In 1837, "The Complete Works of William Wordsworth" were published in Philadelphia, under the auspices of Henry Reed, Professor of English Literature in the University of Pennsylvania. With his American editor, Wordsworth exchanged many letters; in one, dated August 19th, 1837, he wrote: "I cannot conclude without assuring you that the acknowledgements which I receive from the vast continent of America are among the most grateful that reach me. What a vast field is there open to the English mind, acting through our noble language!" In this connection may be mentioned the visit paid to Wordsworth at Rydal Mount, in the summer of 1833, by the eminent transatlantic philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson saw in him, "a plain, elderly, white-haired man, not prepossessing, and disfigured by green goggles. . . . He had much to say of America, the more that it gave occasion for his favourite topic—that society is being enlightened by a superficial tuition, out of all proportion to its being restrained by moral culture. Schools do no good—tuition is not education. . . . He has even said, what seemed a paradox, that they needed a civil war in America to teach the necessity of knitting the social ties stronger." He did not live to see the war accomplished. The conversation presently turned on books. Wordsworth recited three of his sonnets for his visitor's entertainment: "I told him how much the few printed extracts had quickened the desire to possess his unpublished poems. He replied, he never was in haste to publish; partly, because he corrected a good deal, and every alteration is ungraciously received after printing; but what he had written would be printed whether he lived or died. . . . He preferred such of his poems as touched the affections to any others; for, whatever is didactic,—what

theories of society, and so on,—might perish quickly; but whatever combined a truth with an affection was κτῆμα ἐς ἀεί, good to-day and good for ever. . . . Wordsworth honoured himself by his simple adherence to truth, and was very willing not to shine; but he surprised by the hard limits of his thought." *

Six years afterwards, in August 1839, Wordsworth received more exceptional honour from a nearer source. Oxford conferred upon him her honorary degree, and the scene in the Sheldonian Theatre was only less enthusiastic than upon the occasions of the visits of the Duke of Wellington. To Keble, author of the *Christian Year*, and then Professor of Poetry, fell the task of introducing the new D.C.L., and he quitted it appropriately; for the seal of a pious life was stamped upon poet and professor. Finally, upon Southey's death, in March 1843, it became obvious that the symbol of the laureateship must pass into Wordsworth's keeping. The circumstances have often been told but they bear repetition: for we have to remember that exactly half a century had gone by, since Wordsworth's earliest publication. It was a long apprenticeship to serve to the slow favour of the public taste: and the point of the service is this, that Wordsworth was never tempted to court popularity by following fashion; he had educated his public before the public crowned him. Therefore, when the aged poet at first refused the office, pleading his advanced years and his aversion from fresh duties, the reply that he received was unanswerable, because it came as the consummation to his work. "The offer," wrote Sir Robert Peel, "was made to you by the Lord Chamberlain, with my entire concurrence, not for

* *English Traits and Representative Men*, Macmillan's Emerson, vol. iv., chapter I.

the purpose of imposing on you any nervous or disagreeable duties, but in order to pay you that tribute of respect which is justly due to the first of living poets. The Queen entirely approved of the nomination, and there is one unanimous feeling on the part of all who have heard of the proposal (and it is pretty generally known) that there could not be a question about the selection. . . . I will undertake that you shall have nothing *required* from you. But as the Queen can select for this honourable appointment no one whose claims for respect and honour, on account of eminence as a poet, can be placed in competition with yours, I trust you will not longer hesitate to accept it." In this spirit Wordsworth held the Laureateship for seven silent years.

Little more remains to be told. In 1850, four months after the Laureate's death, his widow published, under the name of *The Prelude*, the poetic autobiography of his youth, from which quotations have been made in this chapter. It became the eighth volume of his collected works. The public received it with decorous respect, but left it for the most part unread. Yet more and more a small band of admirers laboured to popularise the poet. Hardly any great critic arose, who did not write in his praise. I would single out, from a mass of such essays, Walter Pater's in 1874, not alone for the great insight and delicate discrimination which always marked his work, but because it pointed out how desirable a possession would be a treasury of Wordsworth's golden pieces. Five years afterwards, the desire was granted; and Matthew Arnold, here and elsewhere, rendered willing service to the Master. The *Golden Treasury* selections from Wordsworth, with Arnold's Preface, have gone far to make known his merits. Already, however, as early as 1861, F. T. Palgrave had surprised his

readers by the extent to which he had laid Wordsworth under contribution in the eponymous *Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics*. Further, on September 29th, 1880, a "Wordsworth Society" was constituted at Grasmere, with the Bishop of St Andrews for President, and for Secretary and moving spirit Professor William Knight, who has deserved so well of the poet. The Society held seven annual meetings, at which papers were read and discussion invited; it also published its transactions, which include, among many valuable brochures, the first Wordsworth bibliography. The successive Presidents, 1882-6, were Lord Coleridge, Matthew Arnold, His Excellency Russell Lowell, Lord Houghton, and Lord Selborne. The Society dissolved when it had completed its work of organising the labours of Wordsworthians. Those labours are not yet done, for the world that is slow to appreciate is slow also to change; and day by day, though a generation has grown up since the centenary of Wordsworth's birth, the love and influence of the poet are widening. His name, it is felt, is written in the golden roll of the poets who are always young.

CHAPTER II

THE LONGER POEMS

The Borderers.

WORDSWORTH'S visits to France during the Revolution years were the consecration of his genius. They touched a visionary of the fields and woods to sympathy with humankind. They moved to numbers the inarticulate music that was within him by providing a subject adequate to his speculative powers, confined hitherto to a too narrow range of thought. But the earliest attempt which Wordsworth made to wed this newly-found experience with his poetic faculty was by no means harmonious in its result. He wrote in 1795-6 a tragedy called *The Borderers*, an unique experiment in that form of composition with which he was never himself satisfied. Coleridge, indeed, to whom he read it at the time, praised it in extravagant terms, possibly through the bias of similar inspiration on his own part in *The Remorse*; for, historically speaking, *The Borderers* belongs to the beginning of the reaction of English drama from the formal and conventional to the sentimental and psychological school. Following his own judgment, Wordsworth laid it by for nearly fifty years, and it appeared for the first time among the "Poems, chiefly of Early and Late Years," of 1842. It added nothing to his reputation, a fact for which the poet was quite prepared. He acknowledges himself (1842) that its acting qualities had not been present to him during its production, "but," he adds, "not the slightest alteration has been made in the conduct of the

story or the composition of the characters; above all, in the two leading persons of the drama, I felt no inducement to make any change. The study of human nature suggests this awful truth, that, as in the trials to which life subjects us, sin and crime are apt to start from their very opposite qualities, so there are no limits to the hardening of the heart, and the perversion of the understanding to which they may carry their slaves. During my long residence in France . . . I had frequent opportunities of being an eye-witness of this process, and it was while that knowledge was fresh upon my memory that the tragedy of *The Borderers* was composed." Even so, taking the piece upon its own claim to merit as a study in the genesis of sin and in the inequalities of justice, it is not altogether a success. Its characterisation is unclear, and its treatment is unconvincing. With the most amenable disposition to the didactic purpose of the play, the reader is left perplexed. Wordsworth was grappling with a great idea, but the form which he chose was neither suitable to it nor consistent with itself.

The Prelude.

In admitting this failure, Wordsworth must be given the full credit of its long suspension from publication. He himself felt very deeply the need of testing his powers, of reviewing at leisure the effects of the severe and sudden discipline through which he had passed in France, and of deciding, in the light of this review, the proper scope for his muse. This careful determination of the form which the circumstances of his discipline would impose, a determination preliminary to the work of his life, and insuring for it an accurate proportion between endeavour and achievement, a determination, it must be added, which in minor poets is mainly a matter of imitation, is embodied in the poem appropriately called *The Prelude*. It is char-

acteristic of Wordsworth, not only that his poetic conscience dictated this task, but also that he withheld it from the public until the larger work should have been given to the world. The larger work, designed as *The Recluse*, in three parts, of which *The Excursion* is the second, was never completed, and it was not until 1850, the last year of Wordsworth's life, that he consented to publish *The Prelude*, which should have been, but now never could be, the motive and justification, the "ante-chapel" of the "Gothic church."

Critics, therefore, who have seen in *The Borderers* a premature trial of skill, display better judgment than those who have regarded *The Prelude* as uncalled-for or self-conceited. It is, on the contrary, a beautiful example of the diffidence of creative genius. It stands alone in poetry as an idealised employment of the conventional invocation, by which a formal means is commonly found of detaching the muse from the scribe, and claiming the privilege of inspiration. Wordsworth genuinely, almost painfully, realised the burthen of preparation which such detachment requires. He searched the sources of his message, that he might fit it to the most convincing form. But *The Prelude* is more than this, more than the record in verse of "the growth of a poet's mind," wherein to discover its limits and its powers. Its biographical interest passes into the experience of humanity. Its invocation is no more personal, but universal—the client not Wordsworth, but mankind; the gift not poetry, but conduct. This success was not a matter of accident, for a man does not happen upon the categorical-imperative mood by chance. It was by the closest and most painstaking self-examination, by an industrious abstraction of every element in his experience of accident or chance, that Wordsworth's

record became a universal law. The even course of *The Prelude*, illuminated at intervals by passages of transcendent insight which make, as it were, their own music, becomes the best way of life—from the finality of youthful acquirement through the disillusion of worldly wisdom to the peace of the "years that bring the philosophic mind."

The Prelude, which was inscribed to S. T. Coleridge, is written in blank verse, reminiscent of Milton, though usually less majestic, owing to a less fastidious vocabulary and to a more numerous flow of metre. It received the advantage of the author's corrections during the greater part of his life, the final revision being in 1832. It is divided into thirteen books, of which ix., x. and xi. have the most historical interest, as covering the short period when Wordsworth moved in the midst of the movement of the world. The higher theme of the whole, the theme that comes inevitably forward through reflection on the facts of experience, is the equal spirit of joy running through all creation. The first two books deal with the influence of natural objects upon boyhood, while nature is still "intervenient and secondary," not sought for her own sake. The winds and cataracts and mountains are perceived with a kind of sixth sense, which, "in the dawn of being, constitutes a bond of union between life and joy." Wordsworth discovers an affinity between our sense-perception and the organic beauty of the world which is conceded as a favour of reconcilement or consolation to our instinctive demand for joy. The joy comes later, with the reason of after-life; but because the treatment in these books is retrospective,* a suggestion is made throughout of the change in standard that is to be. Meanwhile, it may be noted that it is to the strength of this sense that

* Cp. pp. 5 and 6, supra.

Wordsworth's descriptions of scenery owe their charm. He makes no attempt, as happens so often in Tennyson, to paint the picture, onomatopœically, on to his page. He does not translate the thing seen into the terms of the sense of hearing; but over and over again he gives us the simplest sketches of nature, whose poetic quality lies in their record of the sensuous pleasure of distance or perspective, curve or line, calm or motion, by which their appeal is made to us.* Book iii., the period of early manhood, marks the beginning of the change. The transition from the domination of the senses to the affections of the intellect expresses itself at first either by a half-morbid introspection (iii. 109-124, 144-159), or else by a relapse into purposeless sensationalism (iii. 210-216, 246-258). A little later, in Book iv., the glimmerings of the new dawn appear:

> "A freshness also found I at this time
> In human life, the daily life of those
> Whose occupations really I loved,"

but the interest is not yet strong enough to bring forgetfulness of self, with which wisdom begins. Book v., therefore, shows the assistance which reading can render to the birth of reason. The things of sense lose their noisy insistence

* In this context, the following contrast is, perhaps, not unfair:

> "Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet;
> Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro' the lawn,
> The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
> And murmuring of innumerable bees."
>
> Tennyson, *Princess.*

> "A flock of sheep that leisurely pass by,
> One after one; the sound of rain, and bees
> Murmuring; the fall of rivers, winds and seas,
> Smooth fields, white sheets of water, and pure sky."
>
> Wordsworth, *To Sleep.*

in the sight of the "living Presence." The generalisations of "reason, undisturbed by space or time," lead through abstractions to God:

> "Visionary power
> Attends the motions of the viewless winds,
> Embodied in the mystery of words." *

With the sixth book we arrive at the final interpretation of nature in the principle of joy. It is a half-frightened triumph of reason over sense, which

> "Leaves far behind life's treacherous vanities,
> For penitential tears and trembling hopes
> Exchanged,—to equalise in God's pure sight
> Monarch and peasant."

Here, for the first time, the grand note of Wordsworth's teaching is struck, and with it his language rises spontaneously to sublimer heights. The style of sensuous description is abandoned for an imperious revelation of the invisible world, in which the soul of man is disclosed

> "blest in thoughts
> That are their own perfection and reward,
> Strong in herself, and in beatitude
> That hides her, like the mighty flood of Nile
> Poured from his fount of Abyssinian clouds
> To fertilise the whole Egyptian plain."

In the earlier moments of prophecy it is hardly collected language; certainly it is no practical counsel that the recognised glory of reason dictates. The painfully sought in-

* Cp. *The Excursion*, iv. 73, where, in an Hegelian "bacchantic intoxication" of abstract thought, the power of this vision is explained:

> "Immutably survive
> For our support, the measures and the forms
> Which an abstract intelligence supplies;
> Whose kingdom is, where time and space are not."

spiration is as yet too wonderful a power for the poet to write his message calmly. Such a passage as the following is almost extravagant in its self-oblivion, its cosmic consciousness, its promise of the harmony to be wrought for humankind :—

> "The immeasurable height
> Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
> The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
> And in the narrow rent at every turn
> Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
> The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
> The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
> Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside
> As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
> And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
> The unfettered clouds and region of the Heavens,
> Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light,
> Were all the workings of one mind, the features
> Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree;
> Characters of the great Apocalypse,
> The types and symbols of Eternity,
> Of first, and last, and midst, and without end."—

But we meet here the *motif* which runs through all his inspired work, of the unity in diversity, revealing God in the metaphysical and democracy in the social sphere. For at this point Wordsworth, the poet of the affections, is born, and from this point to the end of *The Prelude* his invocation slowly gathers its response in a vision of true equality, in an ideal system of democracy, rising like a Phœnix from the ashes of the Bastille, for the patient striving of a wiser generation. "What one is, why may not millions be?" Wordsworth asks in the thirteenth book, and this theme has become "a lasting inspiration, sanctified by reason, blest by faith." To it accordingly he dedicates his life, for the prophetic fire has descended, and the poet is inspired.

The Recluse.

In speaking of Wordsworth as a democrat, a mental attitude is liable to be assumed which would divert attention from Wordsworth as a poet. It was his own perpetual misfortune that he wore his conscience on his sleeve. We cannot but admire the spirit of scrupulous self-searching in which he built up his cathedral of verse; but our appreciation of its beauties is hardly assisted by the structural details which the builder records. If we keep his own very happy metaphor of the ante-chapel and the Gothic church, we shall retain all that is required to understand his purpose. I am convinced that a part at least of the unfavourable criticism to which Wordsworth was exposed during his life-time was due to the pedantic curiosity of his own prefaces and notes. A great poet, like other great men, is to some extent taken at his own appraisal. Wordsworth seemed to make a deliberate attempt to pervert the estimation of his critics. He wrote lofty verse, and unwrote it in niggardly prose. To exemplify the former, the passage quoted just now from *The Prelude* was hardly typical; the freshness of his passion was overmastering him. But in the following lines from *The Recluse*,* the expression is more restrained and is characteristic of Wordsworth at his highest:

> "By words
> Which speak of nothing more than what we are,
> Would I arouse the sensual from their sleep
> Of Death, and win the vacant and the vain
> To noble raptures; . . .
> —Such grateful haunts foregoing, if I oft
> Must turn elsewhere,—to travel near the tribes
> And fellowships of men, and see ill sights
> Of madding passions mutually inflamed;
> Must hear Humanity in fields and groves

* The fragment (Book i.) from the first part of the poem projected under that name, of which *The Excursion* would have been the second part.

Pipe solitary anguish ; or must hang
Brooding above the fierce confederate storm
Of sorrow, barricadoed evermore
Within the walls of cities,—may these sounds
Have their authentic comment ; that even these
Hearing, I be not downcast or forlorn."

If we contrast with this fine exordium a would-be illuminating passage from the preface (1814) to *The Excursion*, we shall see the injustice which Wordsworth did himself by drawing attention to the mental process of the poet, while neglecting the literary quality of the poetry.* "He undertook," he says, "to record, in verse, the origin and progress of his own powers, as far as he was acquainted with them. That work [*The Prelude*] . . . has been long finished ; and the result of the investigation which gave rise to it was the determination to compose a philosophical poem, containing views of Man, Nature, and Society ; and to be entitled '*The Recluse*' ; as having for its principal subject the sensations and opinions of a poet living in retirement. The preparatory poem . . . conducts the history of the Author's mind to the point when he was emboldened to hope that his faculties were sufficiently matured for entering upon the arduous labour which he had proposed to himself." It reads like a Blue-Book on the ordnance-survey of Parnassus, and to let Wordsworth speak to us in this way is to put a weapon in the hands of those who find *The Excursion* tedious and unpoetical.

* The contrast is the more instructive, because Wordsworth's repudiation ("by words which speak of nothing more than what we are") of poetic diction, as such, as a false idol of convention, may be seen from the lines quoted to have been considerably modified in practice. Note the obvious alliterations with s, v, tr, m, f ; the subtler changes rung on the sounds in brooding above . . . barricadoed ; as well as the masterly variations between common and rare words. The passage would reward a more detailed study : cp. F. W. H. Myers' *Wordsworth*, pp 107-8.

The Excursion.

The poem has no doubt a notable aspect as a system of politico-scientific thought. The scheme of democracy to which Wordsworth's disillusion had converted him was, in essentials and in many particulars, the practical democracy towards which the nineteenth century has tended. To us, reviewing this period at our leisure, the perspective of time reveals the precise place that Wordsworth challenges in the history of English thought. Professor Masson, writing in 1860 on *Recent British Philosophy*, remarked on the "loss and imbecility" of excluding Wordsworth from his preliminary survey; and we, who inherit another generation's progress, must admit even more willingly the poet's right to the title of thinker too. His was no unbodied voice, like Shelley's, carrying our souls away in a riot of transubstantial being; he was no longer anarchist nor atheist, forgetting God in Godwin. A recent French writer * has even discovered what for the poet's fame were as well forgotten, the polemical origin of certain verses, where he examined the very making of English thought, and tested it link by link. Constructively, then, his democracy was conservative. He retained existing divisions of society, and affected no disguise of their utility in stormy protests against their artificial character. The whole value of his French experience lay in his conviction, that no manner of hasty

* Professor Emile Legouis. *La Jeunesse de W. Étude sur le Prélude.* Paris, Masson, 1896. M. Legouis traces in considerable detail Wordsworth's revulsion in sentiment and conviction from Godwinian pessimism (in which *The Borderers* was composed) to the practical democratic ideal of *The Excursion.* Cp. op. cit., pp. 264 and foll., and pp. 310 and foll. "Il serait aisé de poursulvre cette étude et de montrer Wordsworth reconstruisant un à un, par l'observation des humbles, les sentiments dont Godwin avait dépouillé l'homme idéal" (p. 316).

legislation, hardly to be distinguished from revolution, could permanently influence the happiness of the race. True reform must be from within,—equalise the capacities of men, and they will adapt themselves to their opportunities. The false counsel of perfection had said, Equalise the opportunities, and let the capacities alone. In this way, Wordsworth was as far removed from the demagogue as from the visionary. His democratic note is that of the age, because it struck on character, not on works. He is primarily a moral, only secondarily a social reformer; and, in this light, we are justified in passing by the balder strata of *The Excursion*. For the concrete expressions of reform, whatever their interest to the statesman or the politician, are only so many incidental illustrations of the spirit in which the whole is conceived. Wordsworth's supreme merit through it all lay in a consecration of the commonplace. He showed the poetry in the life of the poor, in so far as the poetry of life is the capacity for noble being. He aimed, through the presentation of details, at realising the permanent idea which is their content; and it was this, more than anything, that J. S. Mill meant when he wrote, "From them [Wordsworth's poems] I seemed to learn what would be the perennial sources of happiness, when all the greater evils of life shall have been removed. And I felt myself at once better and happier as I came under their influence."

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> The corner stones, on either side the porch,
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> That fed upon the Common, thither came
> Familiarly, and found a couching-place
> Even at her threshold." †—

When it rose on that pillar of light, to use a Platonic metaphor, which holds the universe together, and connects every phenomenon with God, his style rose with it to an appropriate level, equally unforced. In neither case is anything artificial; there is no conscious embellishment of the style, confusing the limitations of the material. It has, indeed, hardly been sufficiently remarked how spontaneously and comprehensively—with a margin to spare, as it were,—Wordsworth's language was equal to his subject. On planes of thought where metaphysicians labour obscurely, Wordsworth moves with an assured and buoyant freedom. His effect is as natural as his effort was unconscious:

* *In Memoriam*, xcv.

† *The Excursion*, i. 742. This is the Wordsworth of the "And never lifted up a single stone" type,—the line which Matthew Arnold gives as a touchstone of his style.

> "The sun is fixed,
> And the infinite magnificence of heaven
> Fixed, within reach of every human eye;
> The sleepless ocean murmurs for all ears;
> The vernal field infuses fresh delight
> Into all hearts . . . .
> Strange, should He deal herein with nice respects,
> And frustrate all the rest! Believe it not:
> The primal duties shine aloft—like stars;
> The charities that soothe, and heal, and bless,
> Are scattered at the feet of Man—like flowers . . . .
> . . . . He, whose soul
> Ponders this true equality, may walk
> The fields of earth with gratitude and hope;
> Yet, in that meditation, will he find
> Motive to sadder grief, as we have found;
> Lamenting ancient virtues overthrown,
> And for the injustice grieving, that hath made
> So wide a difference between man and man."*

The poem moves mainly on the discursive level. Its lesson is faith,—faith working through love;

> "Life, I repeat, is energy of love
> Divine or human; exercised in pain,
> In strife, in tribulation; and ordained,
> If so approved and sanctified, to pass,
> Through shades and silent rest, to endless joy." †

But its method is the historical, teaching by examples. What, then, are these examples? Wordsworth's dramatic faculty was Sophoclean. His characters in *The Excursion* have no names; they are types of being, not persons of drama. In the first of the nine books into which the epic is divided, the Poet—who narrates in the first person throughout—meets with the Wanderer, the heir of mediæval minstrelsy, a type since decayed from English countryside,

* *Excursion*, ix. 210, 235, 247.

† *Ib.* v. 1012. These were favourite lines with the poet himself; cp. Knight's note *in loc.* in the Eversley edition.

who followed, at the time that Wordsworth wrote, an honourable calling as the medium of communication between village and village. He gathered by the way a stock of experience and sympathy to guide him in his unique position of confidence and trust. The Wanderer of Wordsworth's delineation is partly a portrait of a sometime genuine pedlar,* partly a sketch of the best way of rural life, to which the poet himself under different circumstances would have turned. Thus, in a sense, the Poet and the Wanderer are both local variations of Wordsworth's own nature. The first meeting of these kindred spirits on a Somersetshire common is made memorable by the story —drawn from the Wanderer's store—of Margaret, the last inhabitant of a deserted cottage on which

> " the calm, oblivious tendencies
> Of nature, 'mid her plants, and weeds, and flowers,
> And silent overgrowings,"

had worked their will unchecked, yet left to a more intimate vision so excelling a sense of final beauty and peace,

> " That what we feel of sorrow and despair
> From ruin and from change, and all the grief
> That passing shows of Being leave behind,
> Appeared an idle dream."

In Book ii., where the poet is led "towards the hills," and the scenery changes with the walk to that of Langdale and Grasmere, we are introduced to the Solitary. The lessons of his experience occupy this and the two succeeding books, which cover in the main the same ground as ix., x. and xi. of *The Prelude*, for the Solitary, like Wordsworth, has passed in the course of the French Revolution through the slough of despair to the need of "Despondency Corrected" (*Excursion*, iv.). Thus this group of three

* James Patrick, a distant connection of Mrs Wordsworth.

books repeats on a bigger scale the theme of the first, and the story of Margaret serves to introduce the story of the Solitary, by presenting in miniature the proposition there elaborated at large, that Nature, in her humblest and greatest issues alike, demands the same principles of human conduct. Opportunities may differ, but the capacity must be the same in kind. The Solitary, a "contamination," *à la* Latin drama, of several characters, among whom a Mr Fawcett, a dissenting minister and Revolution extremist, had been the chief, is supposed to have lost, by the sudden death of wife and children, the softening, reconciling interests of private life. He threw, as a lover, the whole force of his eloquence and passion into the public cause

> "of Christ and civil liberty
> As one, and moving to one glorious end."

The glory turned to tinsel and wind.* Like a sheen or a breath, it vanished, and in Book iv. the Poet and the Wanderer combine to repair the shock of his disappointment. Neither here nor elsewhere does Wordsworth indulge in the licence of aristocratic prejudice in which Tennyson condemned "the red fool-fury of the Seine." The horrors of the Revolution were too near and too real to him for any such inaccessible disdain. He had seen its misery, and had borne his part, and he, too, could ask *quis talia fando . . . temperet a lacrimis?* So these books of the Solitary, who had retired to "live and die forgotten" among the heathery table-lands of Cumberland, are composed with breadth and depth. They have that so-called

* "Thus was I reconverted to the world;
Society became my glittering bride,
And airy hopes my children." *Exc.* iii. 734.
Solitary, *loquitur*.

inevitable note, which comes of a studied sanity in criticism. Wordsworth, speaking by his types of faith and order, lifts the discussion out of the yea and nay of political partisanship. He converts the Solitary to the truth of that ampler vision with which *The Prelude* had inspired him.

> "Wisdom is ofttimes nearer when we stoop,
> Than when we soar" (iii. 230),

and stooping to gather herbs of healing and flowers of consolation along pedestrian ways, patiently, like Plato, taking the longer route, to err no more under false moons that fade, the venerable Wanderer restores the moral balance of his friend.

> "—By thy grace
> The particle divine remained unquenched;
> And, 'mid the wild weeds of a rugged soil,
> Thy bounty caused to flourish deathless flowers,
> From paradise transplanted: wintry age
> Impends; the frost will gather round my heart;
> If the flowers wither, I am worse than dead!" (iv. 50).

It is in this faith that the Pastor, who enters with Book v., and tempers the blunter edge of the discussion until the end of the epic, prevails to show that "love and immortality" conquer and transfigure the accidents of fate.

The White Doe of Rylstone, 1807-10.

Carlyle once said that the modern epic will begin, not Arms and the Man, but Tools and the Man I sing. It was somewhat in this spirit that Wordsworth conceived his unequally executed *Excursion*, and in passing from it to *The White Doe of Rylstone* we pass from the region of modern epos to that of Spenserian romance. We learn from the *Dedication* (1815) to Mrs Wordsworth that this poem was composed in the atmosphere of *The Faery Queen*, where Wordsworth used to repair the ravages of materialism

during the years (1806-15) in which he was employed in interpreting providence to a sceptical generation.* The poem was equal to its burthen. Spenser's fancy and Spenser's tenderness seem to echo through its music, and the milk-white doe steals in and out among the chords like a piece of magic imagery, half-human, half-fawn, and therefore, wholly allegorical, winning for Emily, the maiden "consecrated" to the discipline of honour —that noblest renunciation to which man can rise—something of the communion between created things by which the universe moves in rhythm. This victory of design, threading the inconsequence of seeming, is only hinted at here, not elaborated in any system of thought; for the poem is narrative, as its second title, *The Fate of the Nortons*, shows. It is an epic in miniature with superhuman machinery; an Idyll of the Queen, if the association of this phrase permit it, relating the rise of the Northern lords, in the twelfth year of Elizabeth's reign, to marry Mary of Scotland to the Duke of Norfolk and restore the Catholic Church. Wordsworth's material lay ready to hand in a contemporary ballad. The Earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland had taken to the field at Wetherby, having summoned the representative of the ancient Nortons, Richard Norton, Esquire, to bring and bear the standard of their host. Norton arrived with eight sons in train, to whom ultimately, in York prison and under sentence of death, comes Francis, the eldest of the nine brothers, who had followed their destiny unarmed, in atonement for his brief interval of prudent hesitation. To Francis is entrusted the task of taking the banner home again, and laying it to rest in Bolton

* Cp. Sonnets, *Personal Talk*, iii. (1806), with the *Dedication* in question.

Abbey on St Mary's Shrine. But during his journey he is overtaken by the Earl of Sussex, by whom, in his dying sight, the standard of his family is borne away,—

> "But not before the warm life-blood
> Had tinged more deeply, as it flowed,
> The wounds the broidered Banner showed."*

This was the fate of the Nortons, a tragic action with an epic dignity, a succession of incidents and a final catastrophe, such as Scott might have turned to heroic verse without straying beyond the confines of history. Wordsworth approached it from an "entirely different" standpoint. As he says in the prefatory lines borrowed from *The Borderers*,

> "Action is transitory—a step, a blow,
> The motion of a muscle—this way or that—
> 'Tis done";

or, as he repeats in his compendiously conscientious way, —"Everything that is attempted by the principal personages in *The White Doe* fails, so far as its object is external and substantial. So far as it is moral and spiritual it succeeds. . . . [This is] its legitimate catastrophe, far too spiritual a one for instant or widely-spread sympathy, but not, therefore, the less fitted to make a deep and permanent impression upon that class of minds who think and feel more independently, than the many do, of the surfaces of things and interests transitory, because belonging more to the outward and social forms of life than to its internal spirit." In other words, what he elsewhere calls the business parts of the story, the interest of the drama of personal prowess, are of less moment to him than the spiritual being which is thus translated into action. His aim, in *The White Doe*, is to take us behind the stage on

* Canto vi. 132.

which Mary and Elizabeth, Percy and Neville, Norton and his sons play their parts, and to show us, if he can, the purpose of it all in the vision of man's capacity for noble being raised even by the fraction of a degree. If man works out his perfection through suffering, Wordsworth concerns himself with the stages of the perfection rather than the phases of the suffering. In all his semi-dramatic undertakings, he is the poet of the fifth act.

On the present occasion, Wordsworth attains this aim, first, by bringing to the fore the figure of Emily, daughter of Richard Norton, and, eventually, the sole survivor of her kin in Rylstone Hall; secondly, by incorporating into his narrative the legend of the doe, who, "say the aged people of the neighbourhood, long continued to make a weekly pilgrimage from Rylstone over the fells of Bolton, and was constantly found in the Abbey churchyard during divine service, after the close of which she returned home as regularly as the rest of the congregation."* Like Una and her lamb, Emily and the doe seem to grow together by their likeness in purity, until at the end of the poem we arrive at the conception of an incarnate whiteness, in which the pains and perplexities of earth are washed away, and a beatific peace alone remains, like the motherhood on the face of the Madonna. The doe becomes a divine messenger, the symbol of enduring innocence, though the land is drenched in blood. Into the beauty of this holiness, sorrow-stricken, orphaned and desolate, Emily tranquilly steps, to exchange it only for death. It is a triumph of thought, this *κάθαρσις τῶν παθημάτων* which Wordsworth effects. Suffering is transformed by the faith that supports it; pity and fear are justified in the final purpose of an all-wise God, typified by the purest of his creatures.

* *History of the Deanery of Craven*, by Dr Whitaker.

Thirdly, Wordsworth introduced into his poem much of the scenery through which the "soft-paced doe" passed in her journeyings from Rylstone to Bolton. To-day, Bolton Abbey is a slender moss-grown ruin, and the valley of the Wharfe and its surrounding hills are largely protected for tourists and sportsmen in their several requirements. Nevertheless, the scenery of Craven,

> "the shy recess
> Of Barden's lowly quietness,"

and the slopes of moorland from Barden Tower to Skipton, straggling down its hill, retain much of the beauty which Wordsworth has interpreted. The beauty, in the valley especially, is of the sunny order, to which the murmur of the Wharfe, and the changeful light of ancient woods contribute the chief share. It is, therefore, peculiarly the scenery which Wordsworth would have chosen as the medium of nature's healing process.

Something in conclusion must be said of the form which the poem assumes. Whenever Emily or the doe appears —and Coleridge objected to the poem that they appear too seldom—the magic spell of a spiritual inspiration seems to govern the style. It takes on that note—not a technical one—of the highest poetry of the emotions, which thrills us with a sense of groping after a lost affection, after a receding power of sympathy, calling us, half-mockingly, to a loftier plane of sense-perception. This elusive voice, heard now and again through the ages, in a line of Virgil, or a stanza of Dante or Keats, has a mystic far-away cadence, the kind of enchantment which is implied by the conventional halo in painting. We meet it here, touched by a slow Spenserian melody, in the first and last of the seven cantos of *The White Doe*. Take, for

legislation, hardly to be distinguished from revolution, could permanently influence the happiness of the race. True reform must be from within,—equalise the capacities of men, and they will adapt themselves to their opportunities. The false counsel of perfection had said, Equalise the opportunities, and let the capacities alone. In this way, Wordsworth was as far removed from the demagogue as from the visionary. His democratic note is that of the age, because it struck on character, not on works. He is primarily a moral, only secondarily a social reformer; and, in this light, we are justified in passing by the balder strata of *The Excursion*. For the concrete expressions of reform, whatever their interest to the statesman or the politician, are only so many incidental illustrations of the spirit in which the whole is conceived. Wordsworth's supreme merit through it all lay in a consecration of the commonplace. He showed the poetry in the life of the poor, in so far as the poetry of life is the capacity for noble being. He aimed, through the presentation of details, at realising the permanent idea which is their content; and it was this, more than anything, that J. S. Mill meant when he wrote, "From them [Wordsworth's poems] I seemed to learn what would be the perennial sources of happiness, when all the greater evils of life shall have been removed. And I felt myself at once better and happier as I came under their influence."

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But, from behind, a treacherous wound
Unfeeling, brought him to the ground,
A mortal stroke :—oh, grief to tell !
Thus, thus, the noble Francis fell :
There did he lie, of breath forsaken ;
The banner from his grasp was taken,
And borne exultingly away ;
And the body was left on the ground where it lay."

It is as bad as some of the most laboured fighting episodes in the latter books of the *Æneid*; but, to the better fortune of his readers, Wordsworth, unlike Virgil, lived long enough to revise his work. In 1837, the passage was rewritten, with the rape of the banner centrally brought out and the feebleness of expression expunged. It then read :

" He from a Soldier's hand had snatched
A spear,—and, so protected, watched
The Assailants, turning round and round ;
But from behind with treacherous wound
A Spearman brought him to the ground.
The guardian lance, as Francis fell,
Dropped from him ; but his other hand
The Banner clenched ; till, from out the Band,
One, the most eager for the prize,
Rushed in ; and—while, O grief to tell !
A glimmering sense still left, with eyes
Unclosed the noble Francis lay—
Seized it, as hunters seize their prey ;
But not before the warm life-blood
Had tinged with searching overflow,
More deeply tinged the embroidered show
Of His whose side was pierced upon the Rood ! "

Finally, in 1845, thirty years after the first publication, the four concluding lines were realtered to the beautiful text that now stands :

" But not before the warm life-blood
Had tinged more deeply, as it flowed,
The wounds the broidered Banner showed,
Thy fatal work, O maiden, innocent as good " (vi. 119-135).

Attention was thus recalled to Emily, who had worked the design of Christ upon the standard.

Here is perhaps a fitting place to deal briefly with Wordsworth's habit of revision in general. For the recast of *The White Doe* is not only instructive as to what Virgil might have made of the *Æneid*, had his life been spared, but it is interesting as forming an exception to the poet's more common practice. His editors are always perplexed by the difficulty of selecting the "best" text. If they choose that which received the author's final sanction, they are scarcely less liable to give what is poetically inferior than if they invariably print the readings of each *editio princeps*; on the other hand, out of an accumulated mass of alternatives, no critic of an almost contemporary writer can claim to finally establish the best reading, as in the case of a classic of antiquity. It is often said, in Wordsworth's dispraise, that his instinct in revision was less sure than Tennyson's. To read the latter in successive editions is an education in art, and we can sometimes watch the "Tennysonian note" struggling upwards to complete expression. But this kind of censure, though its effect is true, is nevertheless not quite fair. The matter goes deeper than the judge's instinct for beauty to an initial divergence in the poets' point of view. Wordsworth's famous dictum as to the identity in language of poetry and prose was a canon of reaction, as much against the stilted and conventional school mainly of the imitators of Pope, as against his own early errors. Before his contact with reality through his experience in France, which touched him first to a destructive despair, as in *The Borderers*, and next, by invocation through *The Prelude*, to a slow and constructive faith, as in *The Excursion*, Wordsworth, too, had had his period of pre-Raphaelitism in poetic diction.

To this we shall return in the next chapter. It is relevant here to note how powerfully the sense of his mistake and the fear of a relapse affected, not so much his judgment, as his conception of the duties of a judge. *The White Doe* being excepted, he approached his task of correction from a different standpoint from Tennyson's. His pen in revision concerned itself mainly with the thought rather than the form. Form had misled his early genius into *bizarreries* and conceits of style; in later life, therefore, the mere presence of style, superadded as such, conveyed occasionally to his morbid remorse a feeling of distrust and suspicion. Often enough he sacrificed linguistic beauty, spontaneously attained in the glow of creation, to the chilling quality of logical precision, and, puzzled, as it were, by his own excellence, exerted himself for a pedantic reconstruction of his musical thought. A single example from *Elegiac Stanzas* will illustrate this trait. In 1805 Wordsworth wrote:

> "and add the gleam,
> The light that never was, on sea or land,
> The consecration and the poet's dream."

In 1820 he rewrote these lines with a view to removing what he must have regarded as the meretricious adornment of style, and until 1832, when wiser outside counsels restored the original reading, the text ran—

> "and add a gleam,
> The lustre, known to neither sea nor land,
> But borrowed from the youthful poet's dream."

It was what he wanted to say. It was not the inevitable way of saying it.

While this reaction to humble life as the exercise-ground of morals, was strong upon him in his tranquil Lakeland

home, Wordsworth wrote two pieces, published within a few days of one another, in 1819, but composed at an interval of seven years, *Peter Bell* in 1798, and *The Waggoner* in 1805. They were distinguished by Wordsworth from the bulk of his minor poems, not only by their greater length, but also by their titles being printed in capital letters in his table of contents.* *Peter Bell* was placed at the end of the Poems of the Imagination, as belonging to that category, rather than to any other, and *The Waggoner*, after moving about between the Poems of the Fancy and those of the Affections, finally received a place at the close of the former in independent type. Their contemporary appearance, the distinction thus paid to them, and a certain likeness in excess of naïveté, admit of their being treated together. For Peter, the Potter, and Benjamin, the Waggoner, are both types taken from that class of society in which Wordsworth discovered the seeds of human perfection, the class which it has been the distinguishing mark of the nineteenth century to educate and elevate to their present and future responsibilities.

Peter Bell and The Waggoner.

Peter Bell is the more ambitious poem of the two. It tells in fustian the story of a conversion, or rather of an initiation of the humblest of acolytes into the service of nature, in whose temple Wordsworth was priest. It tells it—and this is the remarkable point, and the point at which it has been easiest to mock and to parody—not vaguely nor by abstract reflections, but by tracing consecutively and subjectively rendering the steps in the process of transition. Peter Bell, when we first meet him, is a big, loutish fellow, for whom sunrise and sunset, the river flowing to the sea, the blossoms of spring upon its

* See the stereotyped edition of 1845.

banks, the faith of dumb animals, the mirth of children, and the innocence of women, all the joy and order of the world, attuned for patient ears to perfect music, held no meaning nor message. He slouched heavily through life, deaf and blind to its fuller harmonies. When we leave him, he is a changed man. He has had that "call" to goodness, which used to play so prominent a part in the dispensary of a certain school of theologians, which, however, is represented here as no verbal cant or recantation, but as the conclusion of a series of experience dependent on a strong emotion. In Wordsworth's mood of simple wonder, which marked his reaction from a foregone philosophy, nothing is described but everything related. Peter's insensibility, the selfish security of a man who has never voyaged far enough through the seas of thought, to reach even the shallows of doubt,* is admirably expressed:

> "He trudged along through copse and brake,
> He trudged along o'er hill and dale;
> Nor for the moon cared he a tittle,
> And for the stars he cared as little,
> And for the murmuring river Swale" (331-5).

Presently, on his journey, he espies a promising short cut, and the detachment between himself and the beauties which it opens out serves to emphasize this indifference. Scales are hung upon his eyes, and his sight is literal, not interpretative:

> "Beneath the clear blue sky he saw
> A little field of meadow ground;
> But field or meadow name it not;
> Call it of earth a small green plot
> With rocks encompassed round" (366-70).

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* Cp. Wordsworth's phrase about Newton,

> "For ever
> Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone."
> —*Prelude.*

Nevertheless, it is in this "scene of soft and lovely hue" that the emotion is to come to him which will render his succeeding experience in the terms of a novel sense. The instrument of revelation is the humblest, for in the dell is an apparently masterless ass, which Peter would appropriate for the purposes of his trade. To his confusion, the ass will not budge; and though Peter, struggling against a sense of the uncanny, beats and harries the animal, it yet sinks uncomplainingly to the ground and turns its gaze upon the river. And now the strange double story begins, of nature's simple manifestations working on the man's fears in that lonely place like a superhuman being, and of Peter's indifference changed to defiance and his defiance changed to submission. He flogs the prostrate ass, and it brays, and at the sound his cruel humour rejoices,

> "But in the echo of the rocks
> Was something Peter did not like" (469-70).

He returns to his cowardly work, and the result is repeated,—

> "What is there now in Peter's heart,
> Or whence the might of this strange sound?
> The moon uneasy looked and dimmer,
> The broad, blue heavens appeared to glimmer,
> And the rocks staggered all around" (481-5).

At this moment he discovers the dead body of the ass's master lying on the bed of the stream, and the terror of the discovery in his overwrought mood completes his cure. Nature has played upon his cowardice, and conquered the strength of his insensibility. The process is continued throughout the remainder of the story. Peter Bell obeys the expressed wish of the dumb beast, and suffers it to bear him to its home. He is convinced that

punishment will fall upon him for the wrong which he did to the dead man by abusing and maltreating his faithful attendant. A weird cry is in his ears, the cry of the drowned man's orphan. Voices rustle in the woods, calling vengeance on his cruelty;

> " 'Where there is not a bush or tree,
> The very leaves they follow me—
> So huge hath been my wickedness' " (708-10).

The stones, gleaming mysteriously in the moonlight, or the dust, sleeping upon the lane, take suddenly the stain of blood for the wounds bleeding on the body of the ass which had bled for the dead man's sake. And when Peter tried to defend himself by protesting in his own mind that but for him the drowned man would never have had Christian burial, suddenly there came to him, God knows whence, the memory and visible ghost of a girl whom he had ruined, who had died calling her unborn baby Benoni, child of sorrow. Across this terror of the night hardly to be borne, broke the strong voice of a Methodist preacher, whose door he was passing by, crying aloud, "Repent."

> " Repent, repent! though ye have gone,
> Through paths of wickedness and woe,
> After the Babylonian harlot;
> And, though your sins be red as scarlet,
> They shall be white as snow! (950-54).

By this, and by the gratitude of the widow, Peter Bell is finally healed. He

> " Forsook his crimes, renounced his folly,
> And, after ten months' melancholy,
> Became a good and honest man" (1133-5).

What is the value of this poem? It was parodied

almost before it was published. It has been ridiculed without being read. Five lines of description—

> "In vain, through every changeful year,
> Did Nature lead him as before;
> A primrose by a river's brim
> A yellow primrose was to him,
> And it was nothing more" (246-50).—

have been detached as typical of Wordsworth's power, and in their jejune detachment have been made the butt of indiscriminate sneers and smiles. The world, the worldly world, so to speak, has never quite swallowed Peter Bell. A reserve of self-consciousness has stood in his way. The unheightened simplicity of his story touches the fringe of bathos. Poetry, it is felt, has not been dignified in him, but degraded. The mark of the tract is upon him, and the means of his conversion savour of the revivalist meeting. I cannot but think that such criticism convicts itself. There are indeed inadequacies of expression in the poem, less to-day than when it was first published, but they occur in its business portions, always so difficult to Wordsworth, in its technical setting in the middle of a conversation, and in the narrating of the bare events, as such. It is easy, for instance, to contrast to Wordsworth's disadvantage the opening (Part First) of *Peter Bell* with the beginning of Tennyson's *Princess*. Bess compares ill with Lilia, though the stanza of 1819—

> "'Good Sir!'—the Vicar's voice exclaimed,
> 'You rush at once into the middle';
> And little Bess, with accent sweeter,
> Cried 'O dear Sir! but who is Peter?'
> Said Stephen, ''Tis a downright riddle!'"—

was omitted in subsequent editions; and Wordsworth's Squire, with his

> "against the rules
> Of common sense you're surely sinning;
> This leap is for us all too bold;
> Who Peter was, let that be told,
> And start from the beginning,"

is less dramatically convincing, as the lord of broad lawns, than is Sir Walter Vivian. In 1819, again, such over-realistic touches occurred as,

> "'Tis come then to a pretty pass,'
> Said Peter to the groaning ass,
> 'But I will *bang* your bones'";

and though these particular lines were expunged, yet the subject chosen is none the less responsible for occasional expressions bordering on the ridiculous:

> "Only the Ass, with motion dull,
> Upon the pivot of his skull
> Turns round his long left ear."

But these, after all, are minor matters. Tennyson's supreme happiness of style betrayed him into far worse mistakes than ever Wordsworth's lack of it. The rough edges of *Peter Bell* are much less offensive in art than the over-refinement of *Enoch Arden* or the *May-Queen*. It is by his matter that Wordsworth must primarily be judged, and, fortunately, when it was not complicated by technicalities in the telling, his style was always equal to it. The material of Peter Bell's story does not fall below the level of the best of Wordsworth's work. Its theme is true. As knowledge widens, it is recognised more and more that man is not divorced from the rest of nature. More than the so-called pathetic fallacy,—nature smiling with man's joy, or mourning with his grief; more than the mysterious thrill of spring, animating all creation; more than analogies and anthropomorphic imaginings—all the vividness of paganism joined to the truth of childhood;

—there is daily growing the conviction that our life, as individuals, can only be satisfactorily lived if it is set in rhythmic accordance with the movement of life as a whole. Science, specialised in her several departments, is always adding to our store of generalisations, of first principles beyond dispute, to which to refer the minutest detail of a day. Science is knowledge; its application is the "wisdom" that "lingers." For in this regret Tennyson was continuing the democratic lesson which Wordsworth had taught to a previous generation, that progress, to be effectual, must be in measure of capacity as well as in multiplication of opportunities. "I would the great world grew like thee," wrote Tennyson of Arthur Hallam in Wordsworth's democratic spirit,* and Peter Bell was drawn from the great world to point, in his degree of opportunity, the one true means to equality of capacity. By visitations of nature, suited to the requirements of his case, † Peter learned to set his life to an ampler rhythm than his previous selfishness had attained. He corrected his standard to take in sympathy with man and beast and flower, so that, had circumstances summoned him to be premier instead of potter, the difference would have been in degree and not in kind. There may be something jejune in this story of the man and the ass and the primrose on the bank; but an abstract truth is always more impressive than its concrete example. On the other hand, by the vividness of the examples the truth lives; and Peter Bell, repeating on his humble scale the majestic theme of *The Excursion*, could show more realisably the method of reform than all the rhetoric of the Wanderer. Wordsworth himself wrote very truly to Sir George Beaumont —"the *people* would love the poem of *Peter Bell*, but the

* Cp. *Prelude*, xiii. 88. † *Ib.* 350-5.

public (a very different thing) will never love it." To-day the difference is not so great; and since 1807, when Wordsworth said this, much of the faultiness which made the poem unpopular has been removed. Its merit remains as the process in working of a soul's awakening,—of clay transmuted to fine gold.

The Waggoner need not delay us. It is a careful study of Cumberland scenery and rustic life, with some splendid descriptions of place and atmosphere (notably in the opening lines) and with a light allegro movement suited to the jangling of the horses' bells. But *Peter Bell* connects itself more naturally with a poem which Wordsworth singled out for especial honour, the Ode with the cumbrous title *On Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood.* In every collected edition of his works, Wordsworth tabulated this ode in capital type at the end of his minor pieces. He distinguished it, therefore, like the other poems (and those only) spoken of in the present chapter.* He intended further that its position should signify its purpose, to summarise in epitome the teaching of the minor poems, and to introduce in general terms the theme dramatised in *The Excursion.* He wrote it with particular care, hardly departing at all from the text arrived at after the three years' labour of composition. Finally, he prefaced it with a triplet of his own,

Ode, Intimations of Immortality, 1803-6.

> "The Child is Father of the Man;
> And I could wish my days to be
> Bound each to each by natural piety," †

---

* The posthumous poems (*Prelude*, 1850, and *Recluse*, i., 1888) have naturally been tabulated in the same type.

† From lines known as *The Rainbow* in Wordsworth's household (1804).

which conceal by their apparent simplicity a long chain of reflection, carrying the mind back to a conception of duty at the root of Roman Law, and to a theory of origin, half-fanciful and half-scientific, at the root of Platonic speculation and the mysticism of neo-Platonists.

Quite briefly, this Ode is the universalisation of the particulars of individual experience, of Wordsworth's in *The Prelude*, of the Wanderer's in *The Excursion*, of Peter Bell's in his eponymous poem, and of others in other pieces scattered up and down Wordsworth's works. The universalisation,—but with a difference. It is to be noticed that the first four of the eleven paragraphs or strophes into which the Ode falls, are divided from the rest by a period of nearly two years in composition. But in the first four paragraphs, the pronoun of narration is the personal "I," in the next five it is the impersonal "we," in the tenth the "I" recurs in a single reference to the beginning, and in the last (xi.) the conclusion is personal throughout. The significance of this should, perhaps, not be pressed; but it may be noted at least as implying that Wordsworth began by justifying his own belief in immortality; that in the course of two years' thought he tended to universalise his own recollections; and that at the end again, he was warned by countless Peter Bells around him, to whom "a primrose on the river's brim a yellow primrose was, . . . and nothing more," that his personal experience could not be regarded as passing into a general law.

> "To me the meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

"To me,"—not necessarily to the "us" of the preceding paragraphs. In other words, the feeling that has gradually grown up of recent years, that there is something

forced and rhetorical in the swing and argument of this famous Ode, can be proved out of its own mouth. The Continent takes it as our favourite poem. Frau Gothein, for instance, introducing Wordsworth to Germany, writes—"Englishmen regard the Ode as the author's masterpiece";* but against Aubrey de Vere, Emerson, and Lord Houghton, whom she quotes, can be set the qualified admiration of those greater critics, Walter Pater and Matthew Arnold. Nor can it have been to the centre strophes of this poem that J. S. Mill referred as a "medicine," and Ruskin as a "war with pomp and pretence." For these middle paragraphs are not quite satisfactory. The eighth especially, where the child is apostrophised as a deaf and silent eye, fails somehow to convince. Childhood is exalted above its stature, despite the "soul's immensity" that is predicated of it. Modern psychology, as the basis of modern pedagogics, regards advancing life as opening out avenues of knowledge, not closing them up; as developing the reason and understanding, making them capable, as physical strength increases, of further and further flights into the region of the unknown, not constraining their freedom in the bondage of an "inevitable yoke." If there is anything in Herbart's theory of the individual's life following the stages of the race's culture, then it is idle to regret that the instincts of savagery cannot be throughout protected. Modern science discovers the child "trailing" quite other and more definite qualities than "clouds of glory" from arboreal quadrumanous ancestors, and its psychological growth goes step by step with its biological. This conviction seems to have forced itself upon Wordsworth himself. Granting even that he (and in his experience, the world at large) had lost the light of initiation in

* Gothein, *Leben u. Werke*, p. 225.

that of "common day"; granting that for him there had "passed away a glory from the earth," yet the conclusion is at variance with the premises. The joy of manhood is greater than the joy of childhood, is the note that recurs almost in the poet's despite.

> "I love the brooks that down their channels fret,
> Even more than when I tripped lightly as they;" (xi.)

and the visible presence of God in the child has resolved itself by then into

> "the primal sympathy
> Which having been must ever be," (x.)

the *anima mundi*, or one mind throughout all creation, one being in all phenomena, one purpose threading all happenings, which was Wordsworth's constant care. The child and the philosopher meet, it is true, on the table-lands of divine goodness, but between the former, knowing not evil, and the latter, knowing evil and good, there is fixed the gulf of human life. Wordsworth's philosophic child is a paradox, for the child-*like* heart, which modern ethics set before human attainment, is in likeness of innocence, not of ignorance. Perfect knowledge is perfect innocence too.

Plato regarded education as a process of recognition. A boy learns to know the things of earth by recognising their likeness to their heavenly prototypes, and this faculty of recognition presupposes the ante-natal existence of the soul. Wordsworth regarded earthly acquirements as destructive to the soul's heavenly lore. A boy forgets his untaught knowledge by "endless imitation" of human action. Thus, whereas to Plato the mere power of learning was a proof of immortality, for learning is recollecting, to Wordsworth learning is forgetting, and the proof of immortality is found in the rationale of a child's earliest

imaginings and make-believe. For Plato, therefore, the more the mind is exercised by education, through the applied to the abstract sciences and finally to the science of sciences, the mystery of Being in itself, the nearer the soul approaches to the region of prototypes or ideas; for Wordsworth, on the contrary, at least in the middle paragraphs of his Ode, education is vanity. The more the mind is exercised with experience and with inductions from it, the further it recedes from "that immortal sea which brought us hither." According to these episodes, glimpses of that sea are to be obtained by no strenuous endeavours of human reason, but only by a recovery of childish ignorance and of the fugitive moments of second sight which in Wordsworth's own case marked that period. Thus the paragraphs, commonly said to be Platonic, have but a superficial likeness to Plato's theory of reminiscence, for while Plato justified education, Wordsworth logically condemned it. But, as was hinted just now, the Ode is hardly consistent with itself. Its true merit lies in its opening and conclusion, not in the ingrafted metaphysical speculations. The disparagement of earth's pleasures in the sixth strophe and onwards is practically abandoned towards the end for a restatement of the philosophy arrived at in the final books of *The Prelude.* There, it will be remembered, Wordsworth traced the restoration of his faith, shattered by his disappointment in France, in meditation on the changelessness of nature and on the universal efficacy of love as the motive of conduct,—in the realisation of which human perfectibility lies. Life's accidents were transfigured for him in the purpose that transcended them. Set in their due proportion, they are the means of humanising the soul and of assisting it to the fullest capacity of its sympathies.

"Oh! yet a few short years of useful life,
And all will be complete, thy race be run,
Thy monument of glory will be raised;
Then, though (too weak to tread the ways of truth)
This age fall back to old idolatry,
Though men return to servitude as fast
As the tide ebbs, to ignominy and shame
By nations sink together, we shall still
Find solace—knowing what we have learnt to know,
Rich in true happiness . . .
Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak
A lasting inspiration, sanctified
By reason, blest by faith: what we have loved,
Others will love, and we will teach them how;
Instruct them how the mind of man becomes
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
On which he dwells, above this frame of things
(Which, 'mid all revolutions in the hopes
And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged)
In beauty exalted, as it is itself
Of quality and fabric more divine." *

This was a nobler and more impassioned conception of the permanence of the priesthood of Nature, than that of the fifth paragraph of the Ode,

"The Youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away
And fade into the light of common day."

This was a more inspired conviction of its duties and its powers than that of the eighth paragraph,

"Thou little Child, . . .
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?"

* *Prelude*, xiv. 340 to the end.

It *contrasts* with these middle strophes, but it *compares* with the tenth and the eleventh,

> "We will grieve not, rather find
> Strength in what remains behind, . . .
> In the faith that looks through death,
> In years that bring the philosophic mind. . . .
>
> The clouds that gather round the setting sun
> Do take a sober colouring from an eye
> That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
> Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
> Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
> Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
> To me the meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

The Borderers, relieving sin and suffering by their expression; *The Prelude*, interpreting them by their discipline; *The Recluse* (*Excursion*), curing them by a revolution of conduct in obedience to nature; *The White Doe of Rylstone*, merging them in a vision of perfect peace; *Peter Bell*, atoning for them by a tardy awakening; all the longer poems of Wordsworth are summarised in this statement of his philosophy; that God's unifying purpose runs through all created things, surviving immutably the fall of nations, working out their redemption; that the hand of a little child can lead men to wisdom, if they will but preserve their faith by seeking the meaning of the whole through and beyond their experience of a part. This reasoned and intelligent faith more than compensates the loss of the child's unquestioning joy. It takes up the burthen of life, and carries it still as a blessing.

CHAPTER III

THE SHORTER POEMS

WORDSWORTH'S minor pieces were to "be found by the attentive reader to have such connection with the main work as may give them claim to be likened to the little cells, oratories and sepulchral recesses, ordinarily included" in a Gothic church, to which—with *The Prelude* as ante-chapel—he had compared *The Excursion.* Further, to assist his reader's apprehension of his "purposes, both particular and general," Wordsworth divided these poems into subjective compartments of composition, corresponding, as nearly as possible, to the sequence of moral moods uniformly attained in his longer works. In those there may be traced the architectonic design of a regular succession in mental history, from the sensuous pleasure of mere observation, through the energy of the affections in actual experience, to the reflection of the reason, touched by the poet's fancy or the seer's imagination. And this succession obviously corresponds to the course of human life. It formed, therefore, the basis of Wordsworth's dramatic skill, which distinguished men, not by their acts, but by the stages of their moral development. Accordingly, by the order of moods an order in time * was also observed, "commencing with Childhood, and terminating with Old Age, Death and Immortality." It has been objected, out of Wordsworth's own mouth, that the

* *i.e.*, an ideal order,—not in the egotistic chronology of composition.

classification is often arbitrary; but it is valuable, at any rate, as pursuing, without dogmatism on the critic's part, the high intention of the poet, to make all his works, the longer and shorter alike, contributory to the message which he had to give,—sections or sub-sections of "the law of faith working through love" (*Excursion*, ix. 672).

Poems written in Youth.

The first division of Wordsworth's minor poems falls into two parts, those written prior to his later residence in France, 1792-3, and those written immediately afterwards, while the despair of the Revolution fiasco was strongly upon him. The first part includes *An Evening Walk* (composed 1787-9, published 1793) and *Descriptive Sketches* (composed 1791-2, published 1793), both issued by way of self-justification, to show that there was "something in" the young man whose roving habit and refusal to settle down were so disquieting to his family; the second part includes *The Borderers* and *Guilt and Sorrow, or Incidents upon Salisbury Plain.*

The *Evening Walk* and the *Sketches* have an occasional beauty in their record of natural observation, but the beauty is obscured by their artificialities of diction, and their main interest really lies in the psychological aspect of their subsequent revisions. The heroic couplet, in which they are written, is in itself peculiarly ill-adapted for a continuous descriptive style. Pope had brought it to a fulfilment of its powers in detached antithesis and epigrammatic terseness; and though Keats subsequently washed away its limitations in *Endymion's* flood of melody, and Chaucer had previously broken its rigidity in the supple grace of *The Canterbury Tales*, yet the poets of the eighteenth century showed best the best use of which it was capable. Wordsworth, says Professor Legouis, "com-

mença à aimer les vers dans les années les plus déshéritées de la poésie anglaise," * and his love found expression in an incompatible combination of sensuous nature-description with the heroic couplet style in its most degraded and least spontaneous form. It found in convention, allusion and imitation, in frigid conceits and stilted stylisticisms a sufficient substitute for originality. How profound was the change which overtook him, and how great his terror of a recurrence of the false unregenerate ideals, when living had become to him an interest and a reality, may be judged from the following sentences out of his famous *Preface* (1802): "The Reader will find that personifications of abstract ideas rarely occur in these volumes; and are utterly rejected as an ordinary device to elevate the style and raise it above prose. . . . There will also be found in these volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction; as much pains has been taken to avoid it as is ordinarily taken to produce it; . . . Something must have been gained by this practice, but it has necessarily cut me off from a large portion of phrases and figures of speech which from father to son have long been regarded as the common inheritance of poets. I have also thought it expedient to restrict myself still further, having abstained from the use of many expressions in themselves proper and beautiful, but which have been foolishly repeated by bad poets, till such feelings of disgust are connected with them as it is scarcely possible by any art of association to overpower." The "bad poets" of the foolish repetition had included Wordsworth himself; and these pledges of abstinence are at once a token of atonement and a safeguard against future relapse. In their enunciation he could not but approach his *Poems*

* *La Jeunesse de Wordsworth*, p. 128.

Written in Youth in a spirit of critical harshness, albeit tempered by paternal indulgence. Take, for instance, as typical, the following lines (13-18) from the 1793 edition of *An Evening Walk*:

> "Fair scenes! with other eyes, than once, I gaze
> The ever-varying charm your round displays,
> Than when, erewhile, I taught, a happy child,
> The echoes of your rocks my carols wild:
> Then did no ebb of cheerfulness demand
> Sad tides of joy from Melancholy's hand."

This is the first appearance of the often recurring thought, that a child's sight sees the beauty in natural objects more keenly than a man's, though—and this is the compensation—less interpretatively. But the phraseology is essentially non-Wordsworthian. "I gaze the charms" is a conceit. "Ever-varying" is a convention. "Melancholy" is personified, but obscurely, as holding an ebb and flow of water in her hand. "Sad tides of joy" is an unjustified paradox, and the whole requires reading twice over before its sense is understood. By 1836 the six lines had been amended to four:

> "Fair scenes, erewhile, I taught, a happy child,
> The echoes of your rocks my carols wild:
> The spirit sought not then, in cherished sadness,
> A cloudy substitute for failing gladness."

To glance through the poem is readily to multiply instances.

Again, the *Descriptive Sketches*, "taken during a pedestrian tour among the Alps," though Coleridge saw in them at once a novel simplicity of thought, yet required considerable revision in style before Wordsworth passed them even as "Juvenile Pieces." The 813 lines of 1793 were reduced to 670 in 1845. But the passages excised are less instructive than the passages rewritten. These clearly indicate the

force of that personal revulsion in sentiment which was so largely responsible for Wordsworth's canons of poetry. For the spirit in which such atrocities—to select but a few casual examples—as

> "The viewless lingerer" (l. 92, 1793),
> "The red-breast Peace had buried it in wood" (l. 169),
> "And his red eyes the slinking water hides" (l. 236),
> "On his pale horse shall fell Consumption go" (l. 791),

had been committed, had to be exorcised by *principle*, not by caprice.

The principle of diction had been practically established when, in 1793-4, Wordsworth composed *The Female Vagrant** (*Guilt and Sorrow*). It was written, as has been said, during his *Sturm und Drang* period, the period that passed under nature's healing influence, and its subsequent revisions were mainly concerned with correcting, in the light of that inspiration, the unrelieved melancholy of the first recension. For the perspective of time revealed the French Revolution in less gloomy colours than it had appeared at near sight, and the true basis of practical democracy, which Wordsworth learned from nature, had consoled him for previous failures in dreams of artificial equality.† We can trace, therefore, in *Guilt and Sorrow*, the pen of the old man toning down the pessimistic utterances of his youth. It tells, by the mouth of the wife and mother, now widowed and childless, the story of a soldier's family ruined by the American War. In the later version a sailor is introduced

* It was under this title, and with only thirty stanzas, that *Guilt and Sorrow*, now consisting of seventy-four stanzas, appeared in "Lyrical Ballads" in 1798. It underwent considerable intermediate changes, and first assumed its present form in the "Poems of Early and Late Years" of 1842.

† Cp. *Prelude*, xiii. 88 ff., and p. 19 *supra*.

as audience, whose sorrows, dramatically enough, serve as a kind of pendent to the Vagrant's Tale. For his is the grief of a deed done by his own hand, and yet he wins forgiveness on earth, and through that forgiveness peace. The suggestion is thus made that somewhere is stored up balm for the sorrows, not of her own making, which the soldier's widow has endured. Moreover, the sailor, in his capacity of listener, serves as a kind of Greek chorus. He points the pauses of her story with sage, consolatory reflections on the promise of dawn and the reconciling influence of time. But whether marred or improved by these additions of a less sombre mood and age, *Guilt and Sorrow* is more interesting from the side of style than of subject. The forced effects of the previous poems have almost disappeared, and we meet now the infinite promise of such lines as,

> "In the calm sunshine slept the glittering main;
> The very ocean hath its hour of rest" (st. xxxviii.).

> "Here will I weep in peace (so fancy wrought,)
> Roaming the illimitable waters round" (xli.).

Poems referring to the Period of Childhood.

Childhood, for Wordsworth,—to pass to the second group of his works,—was the time when instinct had spontaneously arrived at the same truths which reason should subsequently discover by the patient process of interpreted experience. The joy of life, untroubled by life's problems, is keener and wilder than that later tranquillity which has resolved the problems by faith. To the child the problems are unexistent, and in these Poems referring to the period of childhood, Wordsworth notes with almost naive curiosity the various aspects of childish habits of thought. The child turns instinctively to joy, like a flower to the sun. In the seventh poem of the series, for

instance, *The Mother's Return*,* we have the expression of this :

> "She wars not with the mystery
> Of time and distance, night and day ;
> The bonds of our humanity.
>
> Her joy is like an instinct, joy
> Of kitten, bird, or summer fly ;
> She dances, runs, without an aim,
> She chatters in her ecstacy."

The mystery of death is a matter of equal unconcern, and this is the theme of (x.) *We are Seven.* So, too, with the mystery of truth, not, as the pessimists had said, a natural instinct perverted by civilisation, but a usage of civilisation not discoverable in nature. This hopeful lesson is contained in (xii.) *Anecdote for Fathers*, a set of verses which have been better ridiculed than understood. *Alice Fell* (viii.) is a tale of childish grief,—a familiarly bitter experience before the sense of proportion is born. *Lucy Gray* (ix.) is, perhaps, the most successful of the group. A tenderness lingers over its mournful theme, and touches us like the white robes of the pall-bearers in a child's funeral in the Roman Catholic Church. xvi. and xvii. are studies of childhood from the plane of later life. The first, *Influence of Natural Objects*, is now embodied in *The Prelude* (i. 401) ; the second, *The Longest Day* (1817) is almost the most sententious of all Wordsworth's writings. He is comparing the course of the seasons to that of human life :—

> "Yet we mark it not ;—fruits redden,
> Fresh flowers blow, as flowers have blown,
> And the heart is loth to deaden
> Hopes that she so long hath known. . . .

* By Dorothy Wordsworth.

Thus when thou with Time hast travelled
Toward the mighty gulf of things,
And the mazy stream unravelled
With thy best imaginings;

Think, if thou on beauty leanest,
Think how pitiful that stay,
Did not virtue give the meanest
Charms superior to decay."

Wordsworth very seldom descends to this level; but the metre in which the majority of these Poems are composed lends itself readily to such easy sing-song, and Wordsworth's parodists usually attacked him in its perilous measures. But the series must not be left without noting the first reference to Dorothy Wordsworth in (iii.) *The Sparrow's Nest* (1801):—

"The Blessing of my later years
Was with me when a boy:
She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;
And humble cares, and delicate fears;
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears;
And love, and thought, and joy."

Poems Founded on the Affections.

The next group of poems, thirty-eight in number, contains some of the finest of Wordsworth's compositions. The chief of all the affections is love, and to the theme of love many of these poems are devoted. We have, for instance, the *Lucy* sequence (vii., viii., ix.), of a young man's love, perhaps the casket of some fleeting romance in the poet's own life. The three sets of stanzas were written in 1799; the first is the lover's presentiment of impending misfortune; the second and third, his grief when facts have borne it out. For Lucy died,—

"A violet by a mossy stone
Half-hidden from the eye!
Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky."

Possibly xv., *To* ——, where Mary, his wife's name, may have replaced the name left vacant in the dedication, and xvi., where the "Dear Maid" vanishes still further from reality,

> "That sometimes I in thee have loved
> My fancy's own creation,"

were also reminiscences of the unknown Lucy. But there are other fair ladies addressed in lines with a more impersonal cadence, sometimes anonymously, as in xi., xiv., xvii., xviii. and xix., sometimes by names, metrically suitable, as the Louisa of vi., the Geraldine of x., and the Emma of xiii.

A sad love-story is also the theme of xxx., *Vaudracour and Julia*, the one poem of Wordsworth which Matthew Arnold could never read. It belongs properly to the ninth book of *The Prelude*, from which its proportions excluded it. It is referred to there* as having been related to the poet by his "Patriot friend" (General Beaupuy), to illustrate the sad events,

> "That prove to what low depth had struck the roots,
> How widely spread the boughs, of that old tree
> Which, as a deadly mischief, and a foul
> And black dishonour, France was weary of" (549-52).

The tale was written in 1804, and published in 1820. Its gloom is relieved by no touch of human feeling in the actors, for neither Julia nor Vaudracour has any dramatic life, and the wooden lovers fail to arouse the reader to indignation with the wooden father who condemns one to a nunnery (like another Juliet of tragic story) and the other to a lingering idiocy with his motherless child.

Two poems (i. and xxxii.) of 1800 are on quite a different level. They belong to Wordsworth's reaction to rustic

* *Prelude*, ix. 553 ff.

life, and deal in his discursive vein with elementary passions. *The Brothers* is a story of the parish of Ennerdale.

> "They two
> Were brother-shepherds on their native hills" (74-5),

but Leonard, the elder, had left his flocks in youth to seek his fortune on the sea. Years pass by, and the memory of his brother, and a constant tugging of the hills at his heart, bring him back to his birth-place. Marking every change in the familiar landscape, an instinctive fear of other changes elsewhere turns his footsteps to the churchyard. There, by an unremembered grave in the spot where several of his family had been buried, he is accosted, tourist fashion, by the white-haired vicar. A dialogue ensues, in which, beginning with conventional greetings, Leonard elicits the history of the intervening years, as it concerned James and himself. The tragic irony—for it is like a "recognition scene" in a Greek play—is admirably sustained. The vicar insists on telling his story with almost garrulous consecution; Leonard endeavours to anticipate its conclusion, without revealing his own identity. But James is dead. Delicate from boyhood, a habit of somnambulism had grown upon him, till "one sweet May morning," he had fallen over the cliff in his sleep. The weary sense of difference, the vicar's unconscious alienation, and this final disappointment of his best hopes in returning home, send Leonard back unrevealed:

> "That night, he wrote a letter to the Priest,
> Reminding him of what had passed between them;
> And adding, with a hope to be forgiven,
> That it was from the weakness of his heart
> He had not dared to tell him who he was.
> This done, he went on ship-board, and is now
> A seaman, a grey-headed mariner" (429-35).

Leonard's character was drawn in part from Wordsworth's own sailor brother, John, and the tenderness of that affection seems to brood over this chastened pastoral; while its natural music rises at one point to a still finer height in the description of a calenture at sea (44-65).

Michael (xxxii.) is infected with a similar pathos. It was composed with the same intention, to show that the primary passions are at once the strongest and the most universal, and form accordingly the most obvious psychological sanction for any scheme of equality. Michael is a shepherd freeholder, who lives in the Westmoreland hills with his wife and their only child, Luke. The scriptural names are in keeping with the sacred simplicity of the theme. For these latter-day idylls have the merest formal resemblance to the porcelain pastorals of Sicily: between Luke and Alexis there is the whole difference of Nature from Pan.

The story of the father's care for his son is sympathetically told; and his care was its own reward, in that

> "from the Boy there came
> Feelings and emanations—things which were
> Light to the sun and music to the wind;
> And that the old Man's heart seemed born again" (200-3).

But financial troubles came upon him, and Michael, rather than sell his son's patrimony to meet them, decides with his wife on sending Luke away. A kinsman in the city should assist him to fortune, and the previous success of a neighbour's son confirms their resolution. It is again the world breaking in upon the repose of the hills, the problem of life in miniature, "new-old," as Tennyson wrote, "and shadowing Sense at war with Soul." Michael, meanwhile, had collected stones together in order to build a sheep-fold, and before the day of parting he makes Luke

lay the corner-stone, that the sheep-fold may be a covenant between them, to remind one of the other. This simple, solemn act done, the boy went to London. At first, all was well. Luke prospered in his undertakings, and the sheep-fold rose merrily up. But after a while the snares of the city overcame the rustic lad,

> "so that he was driven at last
> To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas" (446-7).

This is the whole story, except that the sheep-fold, inaugurated with such happy omen, was never completed:

> "'tis believed by all
> That many and many a day he thither went,
> And never lifted up a single stone" (464-6).

It is this touch of nature, the pathos of work unfinished which recurs all over the world, that gives Michael, the humble shepherd, his share in the universal heart. "The great distinguishing passion," wrote Walter Pater, "came to Michael by the sheep-fold, to Ruth by the wayside, adding those humble children of the furrow to the true aristocracy of passionate souls" (*Appreciations*, 51).

Mother's love is the theme of xxi., xxii., xxiv., xxv. (by Dorothy Wordsworth), xxvi., xxvii., xxix., and xxxviii., in this group. *The Affliction of Margaret* (xxiv.) is deservedly the best known among them. In it we listen to the beating of a mother's heart:

> "My apprehensions come in crowds;
> I dread the rustling of the grass;
> The very shadows of the clouds
> Have power to shake me as they pass: . . .
> Beyond participation lie
> My troubles, and beyond relief:
> If any chance to heave a sigh,
> They pity me, and not my grief.

Then come to me, my Son, or send
Some tidings, that my woes may end;
I have no other earthly friend" (64 ff.).

The affection of sympathy with nature is the inspiration of iii., iv., v. and xxxvii. The second of these (iv.) is *A Farewell* (1802), where the poet takes personal leave for two months of a "happy Garden," which he hopes to find not overmuch altered on his return. Yet the thought of nature's indifference—her independence of the accidents of human fate—breaks upon his greeting:

"And O most constant, yet most fickle Place,
Thou hast thy wayward moods, as thou dost show
To them who look not daily on thy face;
Who, being loved, in love no bounds dost know,
And say'st, when we forsake thee, 'Let them go!'
Thou easy-hearted thing, with thy wild race
Of weeds and flowers, till we return be slow,
And travel with the years at a soft pace" (41-8).

Appended to the *Poems of the Affections* are seven pieces on the *Naming of Places*, where some association of personal feeling has been superadded to the general affection of sympathy with nature. The silence and solitude of a fir-grove (vi.—"When to the attractions of the busy world"—1805) remind Wordsworth of his lost sailor-brother. It is dedicated accordingly to his memory. In i. ("It was an April morning," 1800) the name of Emma recurs,

"Our thoughts at least are ours; and this wild nook,
My Emma, I will dedicate to thee."

Poems of the Fancy.

"Fancy," wrote Wordsworth in his Preface of 1815, "is given to quicken and to beguile the temporal part of our nature," and in the first poem of this series (*A Morning Exercise*, 1828) he wrote:

"Fancy, who leads the pastimes of the glad,
Full oft is pleased a wayward dart to throw;
Sending sad shadows after things not sad,
Peopling the harmless fields with signs of woe:
Beneath her sway, a simple forest cry
Becomes an echo of man's misery."

In these thirty-two *Poems of the Fancy*, therefore, we are to find the record and observation of things that pass, half-recreated by the power of likely association. Take, for instance, the third stanza of vii., *To the Daisy* (1802):

"In shoals and bands, a morrice train,
Thou greet'st the traveller in the lane;
Pleased at his greeting thee again;
Yet nothing daunted,
Nor grieved if thou be set at nought:
And oft alone in nooks remote
We meet thee, like a pleasant thought,
When such are wanted."

The relation of truth to fancy in these lines—the "beguiling," but not the betraying, of the former by the latter—is stated in the last words of (ii.) *A Flower Garden* (1824):

". . . Fancy was Truth's willing Page;
And Truth would skim the flowery glade,
Tho' entering but as Fancy's Shade."

At the same time, through the operations of the fancy, the truth of mere sense-perception is "quickened." The poet returns from the region where fancy had beguiled him to the simplicity of his original perception; but the percept now has been quickened to a livelier and more enlightened being. This appears from the last stanza of viii., *To the Same Flower* (*i.e.*, the daisy):

"Bright *Flower*! for by that name at last,
When all my reveries are past,
I call thee, and to that cleave fast,
Sweet silent creature,

That breath'st with me in sun and air,
Do thou, as thou art wont, repair
My heart with gladness, and a share
Of thy meek nature!"

It is curiously characteristic that Wordsworth, who taught his philosophy by examples taken from the field, Michael, Margaret, and their like, should have exercised his fancy upon the blossoms of the hedgerow. In contrast to Tennyson, whose idylls were of the king, and whose honey was won from roses,* Wordsworth went to humble life for his people and his flowers alike. He made beautiful the "unassuming Commonplace of Nature," and recurred again and again to the daisy, the primrose, the violet, and the common pilewort, as parallel types to his heroes of the plough. Two lovely poems in this series (xi. and xii.), are inscribed *To the Small Celandine*, two—as has been seen—*To the Daisy*, one (vi.) *To a Sexton*, one (ix.) *To the Green Linnet*, one (xv.) *To the Redbreast chasing the Butterfly*, one (xxvii.) to *A Wren's Nest*, and another (xxxi.) to *The Kitten and Falling Leaves*,—themes, it will be admitted, sufficiently familiar, yet capable of a novel rendering by the fancy that sees,

"If the wind do but stir for his proper delight,
Each leaf, that and this, his neighbour will kiss,
Each wave, one and t'other, speeds after his brother;
They are happy, for that is their right!" (xxiv. 33-6).

To his fifty-one *Poems of the Imagination* Wordsworth looked for his chief title to immortality. "I have given," he said, in the Preface of 1815, "in these unfavourable times, evidence of exertions of this faculty upon its

* Cp. Mr William Watson, *Lachrymæ Musarum*,

"Seek him henceforward . . .
. . . In the rapture of the flaming rose."

worthiest objects, the external universe, the moral and religious sentiments of Man, his natural affections, and his acquired passions; which have the same ennobling tendency as the productions of men, in this kind, worthy to be holden in undying remembrance." Posterity, whose judgment was here anticipated with the modest pride of conscious worth, the pride that comes to the consolation of all true greatness, despite the insults of "the ignorant, the incapable, and the presumptuous" (*ibid.*), has not withheld its consent. The function of the imagination, as Wordsworth conceived it, was to "incite and support the eternal part of our nature" (*ibid.*), and in these fifty-one poems, Wordsworth has succeeded in interpreting the permanent element in life, in language that can be understood by all. Imagination transfigures truth, without transgressing it. By insight and comparison, the things that seem are changed to images of things that are.

Poems of the Imagination.

The central note is struck in (xxvi.) *Lines, Composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey* (1798), which is exceptional among Wordsworth's poems as having been published almost as soon as it was written, and hardly at all subsequently revised. Its 159 lines of blank verse have been more frequently quoted than almost any other work of similar length.

> "These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
> With a soft inland murmur" (3, 4).

> "These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
> Of sportive wood run wild" (15-6).

> ". . . that best portion of a good man's life,
> His little, nameless, unremembered acts
> Of kindness and of love" (33-5).

> " . . . that blessed mood,
> In which the burthen of the mystery,
> In which the heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible world,
> Is lightened " (37-41).

> " . . . more like a man
> Flying from something that he dreads, than one
> Who sought the thing he loved " (70-2).

" The still, sad music of humanity " (91).

> " . . . a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean, and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man " (95-9).

" Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her " (122-3).

> " . . . when thy mind
> Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
> Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
> For all sweet sounds and harmonies " (139-42).

—The extracts might pause only with the limits of the poem. For it sustains a majestic level, as well of diction as of thought, articulating the universe in design, and spiritualising man in execution.

The Primrose of the Rock (xliii.,-1831) is interesting, although it is composed in a less inspired mood, as giving in detail the percepts which Peter Bell missed in the " primrose on a river's brim." * Wordsworth calls it

> " A lasting link in Nature's chain
> From highest heaven let down " (11-12),

for it obeys, in its own humble degree, the same lesson of faith, though in solitude, and love, though out of ken, as

* Cp. p. 77 *supra.*

the greatest of God's creations. The application of the lesson is obvious:

> "Sin-blighted though we are, we too,
> The reasoning Sons of Men,
> From one oblivious winter called
> Shall rise, and breathe again;
> And in eternal summer lose
> Our threescore years and ten" (43-8).

A similar fusion of the transient with the eternal, with its similar transfiguration of death and sorrow, is the theme —from different starting-points—of other pieces in this series. The "wandering Voice" which is the cuckoo (ii.); the "Spirit, yet a Woman, too," (viii.—to his wife—) with

> ". . . all things else about her drawn
> From May-time and the cheerful Dawn" (7, 8),

but still

> "A Creature not too bright or good
> For human nature's daily food" (17-8);

the two poems (x. and xi.,—1799) of a later Lucy, whose soul, released from flesh, is gathered into the Spirit of Being,—

> "No motion has she now, no force;
> She neither hears nor sees;
> Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
> With rocks, and stones, and trees" (xi. 5-8);

though, by participation in universal life,

> "She shall be sportive as the fawn
> That wild with glee across the lawn
> Or up the mountain springs;
> And hers shall be the breathing balm,
> And hers the silence and the calm
> Of mute insensate things.

The floating stars their state shall lend
To her; for her the willow bend;
  Nor shall she fail to see
Even in the motions of the Storm
Grace that shall mould the maiden's form
  By silent sympathy.

The stars of midnight shall be dear
To her, and she shall lend her ear
  In many a secret place
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
And beauty born of murmuring sound
  Shall pass into her face" (x. 13-30);

the dance of "golden daffodils" flashed upon silent thought (xii.); the passion of Ruth (xxi., 1799); the faith of the old Leech-gatherer (*Resolution and Independence*, xxii., 1807), who solved by his simple faith many a vexed problem and "blind thought" of dejection; the skylark (xxx.) typifying the ideal of human endeavour, "true to the kindred points of Heaven and Home"; Dion, the "swan-like" (xxxii., 1817), leaving

". . . this moral grafted on his fate:
'Him only pleasure leads and peace attends,
Him, only him, the shield of Jove defends,
Whose means are fair and spotless as his ends'";

Laodamia (xxxi., 1814), whose earthly experience broadened into a vision of perfect love, casting out self;—these, and other poems in the group, in diverse measures and with different degrees of successful imagination, repeat the theme of xxviii.,* that saving powers are within the reach of all,

* *French Revolution*, afterwards incorporated in *The Prelude*, xi. 105-44.

"Not in Utopia, subterranean fields,
Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where!
But in the very world, which is the world
Of all of us,—the place where in the end
We find our happiness, or not at all."

Dion and *Laodamia*, it should be added, both belonged to Wordsworth's period of classical inspiration. The latter especially, with its noble echoes of the nobility of the sixth *Æneid* (Wordsworth had been reading Latin with his son) gives, in the mood of heroic tranquillity which attaches to classic themes, the apotheosis of domestic love,—"no longer as an invasive passion, but as the deliberate habit of the soul." * But Protesilaus and Laodamia, on the classic Olympia which their names suggest, and Michael and Luke in their biblical fields, are alike essentially Wordsworthian.

The series further includes (xxv.) the famous *Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle* (1807), where the music wonderfully follows the thought, and marks by its abrupt technical transitions of metre, the subjective psychological moods. At the beginning of the *Song* there is an allegro movement in iambics; *e.g.*, "How glád | is Skíp | ton át | this hoúr." This changes presently to a passionate trochaic swing with catalexis; *e.g.*, "ór she | sées her | ínfant | dĕ̈ĕ." The trochees, in their final appearance, are wrought to their highest pitch by the device of alliteration in the initial syllables and a triple rhyme:

"Like a | ré-ap | peáring | Stár,
Like a glory from afar,
First shall head the flock of war."

At this point it breaks off, and the plot—now in its fifth act, so to speak, of restored tranquillity—is resumed in leisurely decasyllabic stanzas:

* Myers, *Wordsworth*, p. 115.

> "Love had he found in huts where poor men lie;
> His daily teachers had been woods and rills,
> The silence that is in the starry sky,
> The sleep that is among the lonely hills."

The Reverie of Poor Susan (xiii.), *Power of Music* (xiv.), *Beggars* (xviii.), *The Thorn* (xxiii.), *The Power of Sound* (li.), and some slighter experiments hardly calling for special mention, are further contained in this group.

Poems of Sentiment and Reflection.

The mood of sentiment and reflection takes up the burden of Wordsworth's message in a more didactic strain, and it must be conceded that the poet, consciously moralising, is less convincing and sometimes less melodious than the poet faithfully recording or prophetically interpreting his observations. The sententious habit, to which by his serious curiosity and earnest truth, Wordsworth was always liable, became peculiarly a snare in his purely contemplative hours. So it happens that it is to some accident of inspiration in the writer or his material that certain poems in the present series owe their poetic quality. The rest miss it none the less surely because criticism can only point out, not account for the defect. If any attempt at such discrimination is to be made, it might be said that Wordsworth occasionally presumes too far on his readers' power of sympathy. His mind works by processes so rapid and so familiar to himself, that, when he skips its operation and acquaints us only with its inductions, we are left in a somewhat reluctant state of lazy acquiescence or half-defiant reserve. The associative links are not yet clearly enough defined for the close collocation of trivial incident and weighty reflection which meets us again and again in these pages. Cosmos and the atom may be fused in the fire of imagination; they

can not be poetically related by the normal habit of mind. Several poems in this group do not rise above the level of gnomic verse,—correctness without lustre. From the first half-dozen pieces examples can readily be taken:

> "Nor less I deem that there are Powers
> Which of themselves our minds impress;
> That we can feed this mind of ours
> In a wise passiveness" (i. 20-4);

> "One impulse from a vernal wood
> May teach you more of man,
> Of moral evil and of good
> Than all the sages can" (ii. 20-4);

> "Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,
> The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
> And 'tis my faith that every flower
> Enjoys the air it breathes" (iii. 9-12);

> "One moment now may give us more
> Than years of toiling reason:
> Our minds shall drink at every pore
> The spirit of the season" (v. 25-8);

> "O Reader! had you in your mind
> Such stores as silent thought can bring,
> O gentle Reader! you would find
> A tale in everything" (vi. 65-8).

The "sentiment" in each instance is unexceptionable, but the "gentle Reader" might justly retort that they fail on the side of poetry. To the ardent Wordsworthian, all the moods of his Master are inspired, but no greater obstacle has been put in the way of the poet, as such, than this spurious Wordsworth *cultus*. Verse, after all,—and Wordsworth chose that means of expression with no defective sense of its obligations, — is an emotional instrument; but in such lines as the foregoing, Wordsworth has reverted to its worn-out mnemonic uses.

Though these reflections leave the reader unmoved, yet the missing stimulus is elsewhere supplied by associating them with the great commonplaces of universal moment and consent,—detaching them no longer in frigid *sententiæ*, nor attaching them to inadequate incidents. The moral height of contemplation at which the *Ode to Duty* (xix., 1805) was composed; the indignation of genius against the children of the world which wrote the *Poet's Epitaph* (viii., 1799); or the individual interest which governs the sonnet sequence on *Personal Talk* (xiii., i-iv., 1807); these are very different from the propriety of sentiment gushing directly at "the first mild day of March" (v., l. 1). For when a common system of thought is assumed, all reflection is platitude; the sententious then differs from the sublime only in its degree of subjective passion.

Wordsworth's *Ode to Duty*, modelled as he said, on Gray's *Ode to Adversity*, reads like one of the sterner passages of Old Testament prophecy. He sees the universe obeying the law of order, and finding in that obedience true happiness and freedom, and turns, with the humility of proven weakness, to supplicate the same control:

> "Me this unchartered freedom tires;
> I feel the weight of chance-desires:
> My hopes no more must change their name,
> I long for a repose that ever is the same" (37-40).

It is like Israel, turning from following the desire of his eyes in which he was led astray; and like Israel's God, Duty, "stern Daughter of the Voice of God" (1), takes—for those who repent their transgression—the meed of her Father's grace:

> "Nor know we anything so fair
> As is the smile upon thy face;

Flowers laugh before thee on their beds,
And fragrance in thy footing treads;
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
And the most ancient heavens, through Thee,
are fresh and strong" (43-8).

A Poet's Epitaph is lofty in another vein. It exalts, on the poet's grave, where the final judgment overthrows all the pretences of convention, the child of light above the children of this world. The statesman, to whom mankind is as a chess-board; the keen, hard lawyer; the man of luxurious living; the man of the sword; the physician, the philosopher, and the moralist, are alike unworthy to approach. There is again something scriptural in the justice that turns aside from these intellectual claimants to welcome one whose merit is independent of sounding testimonials, and rests on his self-taught sympathy with the things that abide:

"He murmurs near the running brooks
A music sweeter than their own. . . .

In common things that round us lie
Some random truths he can impart,—
The harvest of a quiet eye
That broods and sleeps on his own heart.

But he is weak; both Man and Boy,
Hath been an idler in the land;
Contented if he might enjoy
The things which others understand.

—Come hither in thy hour of strength;
Come, weak as is a breaking wave! . . ."

It is the moral which Matthew Arnold repeated, as peculiarly applicable to the present age,—that we "never once possess our souls before we die," and whatever the practical utility of the warning, it is at least a reminder of the truer proportions of life.

In connection with these stanzas, something should be said of Wordsworth's attitude towards science. He treats it here with very scant respect, dismissing the philosopher as

> " . . . a fingering slave,
> One that would peep and botanize
> Upon his mother's grave " (18-20);

while the moralist comes off even more hardly:

> " One to whose smooth-rubbed soul can cling
> Nor form, nor feeling, great or small;
> A reasoning, self-sufficing thing,
> An intellectual All-in-all " (29-32).

With this may be compared the similar statement in (ii.) *The Tables Turned* (1798),

> " Our meddling intellect
> Misshapes the beauteous orms of things :—
> We murder to dissect " (26-8).

If we remember that denunciations such as these, penned in the last years of the eighteenth century, belong to the profound reaction against eighteenth century philosophy, we shall not only understand them the more readily, but we shall further see that they are but literary excursions in the field of metaphysics, echoes partly of Rousseau, and partly of Coleridge and Burke, on the side of common-sense against reason divorced from it. It was a reaction, writes G. H. Lewes, "less against a doctrine proved to be incompetent than against a doctrine believed to be the source of profound immorality. The reaction was vigorous because it was animated by the horror which agitated Europe at the excesses of the French Revolution. Associated in men's minds with the Saturnalia of the Terror, the philosophical opinions of Condillac, Diderot and Cabanis

were held responsible for the crimes of the Convention. . . . Every opinion which had what was called a 'taint of materialism' . . . was denounced as an opinion necessarily leading to the destruction of all Religion, Morality and Government." * The reaction, then, was primarily spiritual. It issued in the science of comparative psychology which distinguishes the thought of the present century, but its earliest manifestation came from the side of politics and letters, and expressed itself in a kind of universal franchise, extending the sphere of philosophical enquiry to every spiritual being. Not only the illiterate, the women and the children, but "the numberless victims of the Cartesian proscription," in the brilliant phrase of a French writer,† animals, and plants and so-called inanimate things, swell the crowd of witnesses to the new dominion of soul above reason. Wherefore, as Wordsworth wrote to Coleridge in *The Prelude*:

> ". . . Who shall parcel out
> His intellect by geometric rules,
> Split like a province into round and square?
> Who knows the individual hour in which
> His habits were first sown, even as a seed?
> Who that shall point as with a wand and say
> 'This portion of the river of my mind
> Came from yon fountain?' Thou, my Friend, art one
> More deeply read in thy own thoughts; to thee
> Science appears but what in truth she is,
> Nor as our glory and our absolute boast,
> But as a succedaneum, and a prop
> To our infirmity" (ii. 203-15).

Science, neglecting the instincts and intuitions which throng the spiritual world, is science betraying the spirit.

* *History of Philosophy*, ii. 642.
† Legouis, *La Jeunesse de Wordsworth*, p. 412.

Wordsworth's crusade against systems of sociology in favour of the study of society at the fount is only the expression of this conviction brought to more bitter utterance by the example of the French Revolution.

To revert to the *Poems of Sentiment and Reflection.* The four sonnets on *Personal Talk* repeat the theme of *A Poet's Epitaph*, with the added reflection that Wordsworth himself could only hope to rank among the poets by keeping jealously aloof from "our daily World's true Worldlings" (ii. 8). He further tells us incidentally that in his world of books, Othello and the Fairy Queen were "pre-eminently dear" (iii. 13-4).

The series cannot be left without referring to (xx.) *Character of the Happy Warrior* (1806). In the *Poet's Epitaph*, the soldier received a welcome, albeit qualified,—

> "but lay thy sword aside,
> And lean upon a peasant's staff" (15-6).

For the period of warfare in which Wordsworth's early manhood was spent had, as he says, "naturally fixed one's attention upon the military character."* Accordingly, he endeavours, in this poem, to portray the ideal of such a character, drawing for the purpose partly from the public virtues of Admiral Lord Nelson and partly from the complementary qualities of his own sailor-brother, Captain John Wordsworth, who had died in the previous year. The result is a lofty and yet a human conception. The good that may come out of necessary evil—the consolation of all imperfection—is expressed as follows. He is the happy warrior,

* Cp. *Convention of Cintra.* Grosart's *Prose Works of Wordsworth*, i. 83.

> "Who, doomed to go in company with Pain,
> And Fear, and Bloodshed, miserable train!
> Turns his necessity to glorious gain;
> In face of these doth exercise a power
> Which is our human nature's highest dower;
> Controls them and subdues, transmutes, bereaves
> Of their bad influence, and their good receives:
> By objects, which might force the soul to abate
> Her feeling, rendered more compassionate; . . .
> More skilful in self-knowledge, even more pure,
> As tempted more; more able to endure,
> As more exposed to suffering and distress;
> Thence, also, more alive to tenderness" (12-26).

The tragedy of Trafalgar—Nelson's death in the hour of his victory—was fresh in men's memory when this encomium was composed; but the classical scholar will further be reminded of the quality of Æneas, mistranslated piety,—

> "Whose powers shed round him in the common strife,
> Or mild concerns of ordinary life,
> A constant influence, a peculiar grace; . . .
> Is yet a Soul whose master-bias leans
> To home-felt pleasures and to gentle scenes; . . .
> Finds comfort in himself and in his cause" (45-8, 59-60, 81).

The likeness between the Happy Warrior and *pious Æneas* consecrated to his high purpose, is perhaps more than accidental. For Wordsworth and Virgil both admitted the military hero in concession, as it were, to the demands of their times, and in despite of their own more permanent ideals. Both represent him as a man of peace called necessarily to arms; for both were affected by a similar reaction to rural life and pastoral virtues. The Maid of Naples, as Virgil was known to his less immaculate contemporaries, laboured to reproduce in Imperial Rome, in the Rome of Greek vices and Augustan literature, the

same "homely beauty of the good old cause" * which the simple recluse of Miss Wordsworth's diary was strenuously opposing to the politics and the philosophy of the eighteenth century. Both were reactionaries in order to reform; both gathered up into their work any loyal and old tradition which made for the ancient virtues of their people; and Wordsworth, like Virgil, returned to the elder classics of his country, to Chaucer and Spenser in especial, so that their spirit and the spirit of "our peace, our fearful innocence," † often breathes in his verses. It is not surprising, therefore, that the author of *Laodamia*, the poet who at one time thought of translating the *Æneid*, who echoes in single lines the majestic music of Virgil, should have fashioned his Happy Warrior in the likeness of Virgil's hero,—as different as possible from the instinctive fighters of the *Iliad* or the passionless tacticians of more recent warfare.

There should be noticed in this poem the use of the heroic couplet in its contrast with that metre in the *Poems composed in Youth.* One technical point of distinction will be found in the five-fold recurrence (within 85 lines) of *triplets* in rhyme, thus breaking the antithetical monotony of the measure. But the greatest change is in diction.—There are no personifications, no inversions, no *bizarreries*; while the modulated sequence of ideas does away with that forced juxtaposition of detached epigrams which was so prominent a feature of his early verse.

The three Matthew pieces (x., xi., and xii.) of 1799, called *Matthew*, *Two April Mornings*, and *The Fountain* respectively, are simple and sincere, but call for no special comment. xvii., composed in autumn (1819), and transferring the lesson of the seasons to the periods of the

* Sonnet, *To Milton.* † *Ib.*

poet's own life, contains some fine lines, but is rhetorical rather than poetic. The Daisy of ix. (1803), "thy function apostolical in peace fulfilling," is less pleasing than the Daisy poems of the fancy. There are three poems about dogs, xvi., xvii., and xviii., all composed in 1805. The *Tribute* (xvii.) is perhaps a little over-strained:

> "For love, that comes wherever life and sense
> Are given by God, in thee was most intense;
> A chain of heart, a feeling of the mind,
> A tender sympathy, which did thee bind
> Not only to us Men, but to thy Kind:
> Yea, for thy fellow-brutes in thee we saw
> A soul of love, love's intellectual law:—"

The draft is too big to be honoured. The dog of xviii. (*Fidelity*) has watched, like the ass in *Peter Bell*, for three months by the dead body of a traveller, his master. The remaining poems in the group include (xxi.) *The Force of Prayer* (1808), which belongs, with the *White Doe*, to the Craven district of Yorkshire.

Miscellaneous Poems.

There is a small collection of seventeen pieces, which Wordsworth placed in no definitive category. The most notorious of these is (xii.) *Goody Blake and Harry Gill** (1798). Its second title, "A True Story,"—for the incident happened in Warwickshire at the end of last century—is perhaps its best justification. Granted that a farmer, in a very cold winter, did actually lie in wait under his own hedge, to surprise an old woman who was robbing it of a few sticks, and that the venial thief, taking refuge in curses, did doom him to perpetual shivering, we have a subject quite susceptible of

* "From 1815 to 1843, this poem was classed among those of 'the Imagination.' In 1845 it was transferred to the list of 'Miscellaneous Poems.'"—Eversley *Wordsworth*, i. 254.

poetical treatment. That Wordsworth, in the young ardour of his regenerate style, could accurately hit the mean between the simplicity which the persons of the drama required and the poetic "heightening" demanded by the eeriness of the action, is, however, not so certain; and to this defect are due the lapses into the ridiculous with which the piece abounds:

> "Of waistcoats Harry has no lack,
> Good duffle grey, and flannel fine;
> He has a blanket on his back,
> And coats enough to smother nine" (5-8).

> "Sad case it was, as you may think,
> For very cold to go to bed;
> And then for cold not sleep a wink" (46-8).

> "That day he wore a riding-coat,
> But not a whit the warmer he;
> Another was on Thursday brought,
> And ere the Sabbath he had three" (109-12).

To defend this as realism is no sufficient apology. The reality of Harry Gill's affliction was not in the details of his wardrobe, and the pedestrian enumeration of the coats he wore neglects the one poetic quality of the story—the efficacy of the beldam's curse. In the same way, to keep the recital on the colloquial level of language is to detract from the weirdness of its inner meaning. Think for a moment how Coleridge dealt with the curse on the Ancient Mariner—a true example of realism in art—and the shortcomings of Goody Blake are clear.

The *Epistle* (i., 1811) to Sir George Beaumont suffers from lack of tangible interest. It has no beginning and no end, and contains only a single notable line,—"A little, daring, would-be waterfall." The *Gold and Silver Fishes in a Vase*, with its sequel, *Liberty* (ii. and iii.,—

1829), belong to Wordsworth's uncreative period. The tameness of excellent purpose pervades such lines as,

> "The beetle loves his unpretending track,
> The snail the house he carries on his back;
> The far-fetched worm with pleasure would disown
> The bed we give him, though of softest down;
> A noble instinct; in all kinds the same,
> All ranks! What sovereign . . . etc." (iii. 71-6);

though an echo of more inspired moments may be heard in the second stanza of ii.—

> "Yet might your glassy prison seem
> A place where joy is known,
> Where golden flash and silver gleam
> Have meanings of their own."

The remaining miscellaneous poems are of late origin and indifferent value.

Inscriptions.

Of the fifteen poems, collectively known as Inscriptions, a little series of five (x. to xiv.), "supposed to be found in and near a hermit's cell," written in 1818, are perhaps the best. The following, for instance, is quite in keeping with the origin suggested:

> "Hast thou seen, with flash incessant,
> Bubbles gliding under ice,
> Bodied forth and evanescent,
> No one knows by what device?
>
> Such are thoughts!—A wind-swept meadow
> Mimicking a troubled sea,
> Such is life; and death a shadow
> From the rock eternity!"

Omitting the *Selections from Chaucer, Modernised*, which found a place here in the 1845 edition of Wordsworth's works, we pass—as he intended—to the final group dealing

with "Old Age, Death, and Immortality." There are five "poems referring to old age" and fifteen "epitaphs and elegiac pieces." *The Old Cumberland Beggar* (1798) is the first, the longest, and the best of the series. It preserves the memory of an almost extinct institution—in itself no doubt a survival of feudalism—of pensioners, that is to say, attached to a district and personally supported by gifts in kind. Charity organisation and indoor relief have done away with this class of mendicant; indeed, as the parochial horizon widens, they are naturally doomed, but there was a familiar picturesqueness in their state which could not but appeal to Wordsworth. This poem, too, is composed in Wordsworth's pastoral manner, in which, as Walter Pater wrote, "by raising nature to the level of human thought, he gives it power and expression: he subdues man to the level of nature, and gives him thereby a certain breadth and coolness and solemnity." * It wins, therefore, from line to line by its idealising power, until we forget what is best forgotten, its origin as a polemic against the work-house. The stoop of old age is finely rendered:

Poems referring to Old Age. Epitaphs.

> ". . . On the ground
> His eyes are turned, and, as he moves along,
> *They* move along the ground; and, evermore,
> Instead of common and habitual sight
> Of fields with rural works, of hill and dale,
> And the blue sky, one little span of earth
> Is all his prospect" (45-51).

But for all he seems an encumbrance, he is not sunken "so low as to be scorned without a sin" (83). He is a constant reminder to charitable action. Children learn in him the respect due to grey hairs; students receive from

* *Appreciations*, p. 47.

him "that first mild touch of sympathy and thought" (114) which moves their books to life:

> ". . . The easy man
> Who sits at his own door,—and, like the pear
> That overhangs his head from the green wall,
> Feeds in the sunshine; the robust and young,
> The prosperous and unthinking, they who live
> Sheltered, and flourish in a little grove
> Of their own kindred;—all behold in him
> A silent monitor" (116-22).

Nay, more—and with admirable sense:

> ". . . Man is dear to man; the poorest poor
> Long for some moments in a weary life
> When they can know and feel that they have been
> Themselves, the fathers and the dealers-out
> O. some small blessings, . . .
> . . . for this single cause,
> That we have all of us one human heart" (147-53).

The universal heart,—for the argument returns to this again and again throughout the poet's work,—the universal heart as the prime sanction of liberty to all things that feel, building it up on no conventions or contracts of an artificial society, but securing it firmly on human nature itself,—even the old wayside beggar, whose use seems so circumscribed and small, can claim his share in this,—

> "Then let him pass, . . .
> And let the chartered wind that sweeps the heath,
> Beat his grey locks against his withered face. . . .
> Let him be free of mountain solitudes;
> And have around him, whether heard or not,
> The pleasant melodies of woodland birds. . . .
> As in the eye of Nature he has lived,
> So in the eye of Nature let him die!" (171 ff.).

The Small Celandine, to which two poems of the fancy were inscribed, is the subject of the third in the present

series. In its decay, when it has lost the power to close itself up against the wind and rain, it serves as a warning of the fate of men :—

> " 'It doth not love the shower, nor seek the cold :
> This neither is its courage nor its choice,
> But its necessity in being old.' . . .
> To be a Prodigal's Favourite—then, worse truth,
> A Miser's Pensioner—behold our lot !
> O Man, that from thy fair and shining youth
> Age might but take the things Youth needed not ! " (14, 21).

Among the Epitaphs the most justly renowned is vi. (1805) *Elegiac Stanzas suggested by the picture of Peele Castle in a storm, painted by Sir George Beaumont.* * The poem falls naturally into three parts,—stanzas 1 to 8 being the poet's vision of the sea before the drowning of Captain Wordsworth in 1805 had revealed its crueller moods; stanzas 9 to 13 being devoted to the grief of that loss, and the sympathy with nature's deeper emotions that it aroused, while stanzas 14 and 15 sum up the matter in the large spirit of humanity,—" not without hope we suffer and we mourn." The whole is composed in a very lofty strain, but one line stands out in especial, as epitomising the bulk of Wordsworth's teaching,—stanza 9, line 4,

> " A deep distress hath humanised my soul."

The present distress was the death of his sailor brother, to whose memory vii. (*To the Daisy*) and viii. (*Elegiac Verses*) are also devoted, but its application may be widened to include the humanising influence of Wordsworth's disappointment in France. For in the course of our survey of these shorter poems from Childhood to Old Age, we have heard again and again the new strong note of

* See pp. 36 and 72, *supra*.

faith and love which succeeded the uncertain thought and imitative style of the poet's early manhood. We have seen this influence in its weakness and its strength, but its faults have always been the excess of its qualities, never their defect. From the level of conviction to which Wordsworth's experience had exalted him, his conscientiousness could never decline. The table-lands to which he conducts us may at times be bald and bare, but their buoyancy never fails. The ample view remains, and the moral purpose of the guide.

The last word, like the first, of any account of Wordsworth's shorter poems, must belong to psychology. Taking them more or less in detail, as has just been done, the reader is perplexed by a kind of sameness running through them, a something less than the whole of vision taming the poet's frenzy. Conduct, said Matthew Arnold, is three-fourths of life, and it is as though Wordsworth had held his life complete without the missing quarter. His love, so lightly grasped, so readily abandoned; his sorrow, so serenely deep, so wholly healed; his enthusiasm, so hedged about with bounds and limits; his joy, so moderate and so sane withal; these, it has been felt, are not the moods in which the fire of Prometheus is kindled before men. But it is in this aspect of philosophic calm that to read Wordsworth is an initiation. Rapt in a vision of harmonising purpose beyond the insistent succession of experience, securely interpreting the accidents of fortune by the revelation of faith, attaining in his course sometimes the sternness, sometimes the tenderness, invariably the inexorableness of prophecy, without haste and, above all, without prejudice, Wordsworth is the poet of a passionate love in a more than mortal sense. To have read Wordsworth intelligently is not only to have condoned any

artistic shortcoming, but it is to have acquired a new standard of excellence in life, a belief in beauty and perfection, exacting, it may be, as an ideal of conscience, but infinitely merciful and of a large sympathy in criticism and understanding. Wordsworth is superhuman, an Olympian aloof from the world, only by excess of humanity. Every man has his own range of sympathy, his own philosophy and scheme of life,—selfish, parochial, patriotic or cosmopolitan. But the ungenial member of a small household in a narrow vale of an English county—if this be the picture of the poet which has impressed the world—wove into the texture of his verse the thoughts of all sentient beings and the feelings of all inanimate things, making the paradox a commonplace by the lonely labours of his mind. For Miss Wordsworth's Diary gives ample testimony to her brother's toil in composition, a toil which is shown by the history of his text to have been for the truthful expression of his hard-won inspiration. On these heights there must be peace, for their outlook is eternity. But it was only through the strength of his impassioned sensibility that Wordsworth's reason grew remote.

Or if this claim of a Pisgah prospect from the least of Wordsworth's poems be accounted too presumptuous, and this talk of an initiation by their means into a mood of being at once more solemn and nearer to reality be held too serious for the poet's fame, we may approach them from another side. Wordsworth's gallery of Cumbrian portraits teaches, like Plutarch's *Lives*, moral philosophy by examples. He stands to the north-west of England as Dickens to the London that is passing away, and the fault is our own, not his, if the simple passions of elemental life are of less interest than the complex existence of the city. More than this; the sensational school of English fiction

has now so long been accustomed to "exploit" special tracts of life for the purposes of its trade, introducing a conventional machinery of situations and effects in the place of truth and interpretative imagination, that the classics of England, Shakespeare and Milton, Scott and Wordsworth, in their several degrees, to whom a hot-house nature was false art, are in danger of being honoured unread. Wordsworth's care for humanity was intense, and Wordsworth's men are to-day, as yesterday, the types of England's greatness and her strength. Let us hold fast by this;—the power of nations is built upon conduct as on a rock, not upon arms, not upon wealth; and in this final test, the humble "statesmen" of the Cumbrian hills shine out from their obscurity like stars. To help us to realise our capacity for perfection "commencing with Childhood, and terminating in Old Age, Death and Immortality," as a primrose is perfect in April, is the achievement of Wordsworth's minor poems.

CHAPTER IV

MEMORIALS OF TOURS AND SONNETS

HORACE'S dictum about travellers (*cœlum, non animum, mutant*) applies with almost personal force to Wordsworth. For, after his first "humanising" transformation in France, the poet abroad was always much the same as the poet at home. He enlarged, of course, the limits of his local colour, but as the characters which he set in it were of similar type, so, too, the influence of the new scenery was rather conservative in its tendency than expanding. He returned home with a fresh affection for the country which he has made his own, and this habit of travel connects itself so closely with a characteristic of his style as to be well worth dwelling upon. He approached nature from within rather than from without, bringing to her the delicate homage of careful interpretation, as though she were a palimpsest written over with superficial characters, concealing an inner message, and not an open page to be categorically described. For the external forms that she assumed, except in so far as they served to train his observation, he can hardly be said to have cared. The simpler these were, and the more familiar they became to him by daily intercourse at home, the less liable he was to error in his reading of the message underneath. Their unfamiliarity, or their wilder and more engaging aspect, rather distracted and disturbed the correctness of that ulterior search. In this, as in so much else, despite their essential convergence in

teaching, Wordsworth stood in marked contrast with Tennyson. The later laureate had an unrivalled faculty of arresting in language the features of a landscape. He takes us to the Tropics, and we see their rich luxuriance of vegetation, and hear the long drowsiness of their insect-life. Roses blush visibly, waters audibly murmur, under the wonderful strokes of his pen. He uses his words like musical sounds, so that even in silent reading the disposition of his vowels and consonants forces an effect upon our primary senses. Thus, every fresh sight that Tennyson saw, every fresh description of a sight that he realised, provided new matter for his powers. He exercised his language upon it until that wonderful instrument had reproduced it, in actual sensible likeness, in its own domain of art. This is, more than the philosophy of *In Memoriam*, more than the sociology of the *Princess*, the gift of Tennyson to his generation, and to have brought our beautiful English language to its highest and least self-conscious expression, to have made it accord, like a musical instrument in the hand of a master, to every light and shadow on nature's face is by no means a slight achievement.

But Wordsworth went quite otherwise to work. His words were not sounds but symbols, and his range of symbols was limited in the direction of natural phenomena. The Platonic quality of his mind, the search for unity in diversity, would in itself have prevented the multiple pictorial variety which is at once Tennyson's weakness and his charm. To Wordsworth, knowing every leaf of a certain circumscribed district, the rest of scenery was only the stage property of the same spirit; it would have oppressed him to enumerate its particular shapes. The awe of Switzerland, the languor of Italy, the peace of the Rhine were not so many different realities to be crystallised in

undying language; but beneath their seeming differences they were to him manifestations of the same world-soul, whose outward forms he had penetrated at home. Here, as there, the procession of the seasons spoke to him of order in nature; the wealth of form and colour bestowed so lavishly upon the face of the earth meant to him the sanction of beauty in being, rather than of utility in doing, as the plain principle of conduct; the faith of dumb animals dictated to him the larger functions of higher gifts, and the elementary virtues of humble life were to him the prototypes of human endeavour. The libertine wind, the flowers that blossomed in joy, the creatures that watched with love,—what matter for the external face that nature wore when her universal heart was beating so near? To Wordsworth, therefore, all scenery was equally solacious; for he travelled through it, not as from acquaintance to acquaintance, seeking a new sensation at every stage, but as through the many rooms of a single mansion, presided over by a familiar friend.

Scotland, 1803 and 1804.

He has left the record, for instance, of two tours in Scotland, the interest of which lay for him not in the characteristic differentia of Scotch lakes and moors, but in a few human affinities, where the place is the accessory, and the sentiment the essence. There are three poems to the honour of Burns, to whose genius he owed so much and paid so sympathetic a tribute. There are the stanzas at Rob Roy's grave, which, entirely apart from the rhythm of their music, are attractive for their boldness of thought. "He came an age too late" is the poet's first apology for the outlaw bandit, and then, by a rapid transition, Wordsworth set Rob Roy in the midst of contemporary politics, and saw that he was born "an age too soon." His Napoleonic

qualities might have made him the Buonaparte of Great Britain. Finally, out of the grave, the nobler memory of the dead man prevails. Different circumstances would have developed him differently, and Rob Roy would surely have been found that day, battling for the right on the side of the poor,—for "thou did'st love the *liberty* of man." There is the wonderful little poem called *Stepping Westward*, in which the chance greeting of a stranger by Loch Katrine, "What, are you stepping westward?" passed, in the poet's sensitive imagination, into the voice of the sunset hour, inviting him, as by right indefeasible, to enter without fear the region of endless light. It gave "a human sweetness" to the accents of that awful solitude which oppresses the most worldly of us at the last. It is in touches like these that Wordsworth's instinct was supreme; or, if supreme be objected to, as involving a superiority by comparison, then let us say, in these touches Wordsworth's genius was unique, for no other poet has struck a note so profound in language so transparent. The dim apperceptions that come to one or another of us now and again during life, across who knows what bounds of space and time, are brought here to a concrete expression. But let any of us try to arrest one of those fleeting shadows of the mind, cast, as in Plato's cave, by a light outside of our experience, and he will realise the better the achievement of these six-and-twenty octosyllabic lines. I would connect with *Stepping Westward*, two short pieces in this group, *To a Highland Girl*, and the *Solitary Reaper*, in both of which the eventual impression produced is of a permanence in the transient,—a permanence not only by the grace of memory but in the nature of things. The ships that speak one another in the night, or the islands that cry to one another across seas of misunderstanding,

to use familiar metaphors of life, only *seem* to be sundered because of the incompleteness of our sensibility. The intelligence that would turn aside to pursue them is vain, for we cannot transgress its limitations; but in so far as they afford us glimpses of the ultimate harmony of end, which proceeds from unity of design, so far they are valuable in themselves, in their fleetingness, in their several and separate presentments. And Wordsworth who made the commonplace miraculous by the wealth of meaning which he extracted from it, who struck the stone, and the waters gushed forth, made, too, the miracle of sub-consciousness familiar, that he who runs may read. This Highland lass, who passed out of his material life, more completely than she had ever entered it, never lost her spiritual companionship, the breath of revelation from the time to come, when he, and she, and the song she sang, and the place of her singing, should all be gathered into the whole of beauty,—one and universal. For the poet was not as other men, to whom love and joy are passions of the flesh. Wordsworth's passion had ever something mystical about it, like the desire of the remote and consecrated pilgrim, who holds his experience only as the pledge of perfect knowledge.

The Continent, 1820.

Sixteen years later, an Helvetian and Italian girl were added to the record (in *The Three Cottage Girls*), rather because they recalled the Highland maiden than for any new beauty of their own. Indeed, this middle-aged tour through Belgium and along the Rhine to Switzerland, over the Gothard into northern Italy as far as Milan, and back by the Simplon Pass, did not produce any remarkable output of verse. On the contrary, we arrive with these years at Wordsworth's barren period, where the fault is not in

excess of originality, in a naïveté carried to extremes, and exaggerated in defiance of unintelligent criticism, but is rather to be traced to a far sadder source in the gradual cessation of the poetic flame. Wordsworth laboured on without the light, sometimes plagiarising himself — the most sterile of all kinds of imitation,—sometimes writing ordinary verse like an ordinary man. It was on this level that the later Memorials of Tours were composed, the present series, for instance, of 1820, giving us nothing more than a few desultory descriptions and reflections, which, generally speaking, begin with an apostrophe and end with a prayer. The field of Waterloo, the scene of "that world-earthquake" whose seismic history Wordsworth had followed with so close and vivid an interest, only suggests to him the buried horror of its carnage, and the most characteristic note is struck in the sonnet written *At Dover* (xxxvii.) on the poet's return.

Evening Voluntaries.

There was another visit to Scotland in the autumn of 1831, to which *Yarrow Revisited and Other Poems* belong,—twenty-six in all, twenty-three of which are in sonnet form.* Appended to them is a little series of *Evening Voluntaries* (thirteen in number), written with two exceptions between 1832 and 1835,—viii., an impromptu, dating from 1804, and ix., *Composed upon an Evening of extraordinary Splendour and Beauty*, from 1818. The latter may be taken first, as being almost the last instance in which Wordsworth discovered before his rayless years the magic of his former inspiration. It is an Ode in four stanzas, the last of which reverts to the conclusion of the *Intimations of Immortality* Ode; but it is rather in the

* This series had the special inspiration of Wordsworth's farewell visit to Sir Walter Scott, cp. pp. 32 and 33, *supra*.

second of the four that the harp was taken down from the willows. I quote this stanza at length, and would dwell on it for a moment with the loving insistence that clings to a receding point of vision.

> "No sound is uttered, but a deep
> And solemn harmony pervades
> The hollow vale from steep to steep,
> And penetrates the glades.
> Far-distant images draw nigh,
> Called forth by wondrous potency
> Of beamy radiance, that imbues,
> Whate'er it strikes, with gem-like hues!
> In vision exquisitely clear,
> Herds range along the mountain side,
> And glistening antlers are descried,
> And gilded flocks appear.
> Thine is the tranquil hour, purpureal Eve!
> But long as god-like wish, or hope divine,
> Informs my spirit, ne'er can I believe
> That this magnificence is wholly thine!
> —From worlds not quickened by the sun
> A portion of the gift is won;
> An intermingling of Heaven's pomp is spread
> On ground which British shepherds tread."

"From worlds not quickened by the sun a portion of the gift is won,"—the lines take on a personal pathos as we follow the aging poet along the downward slope; for that portion of the gift, and the grateful pride of priesthood that it evoked, were hardly to be won again. On the level tracts of middle life the music died distantly away. At home in Cumberland, where the rest of the *Evening Voluntaries* were also composed, failing the inspiration of that "evening of extraordinary splendour," there is no note like this. Wordsworth's vision has became objectified, and of his interpretative power its results only, not its methods, remain. Take, for instance, the two voluntaries *To the*

Moon (xii. and xiii.,—1835). The first, written at the sea-side, pursues the categorical method. The Moon gladdens the mountains and their streams, pervades the wilderness and penetrates the forest, chequers the minster's gloom, and reaches the prisoner in his cell. The Moon has power for phrenzy and for peace; she tidally affects the sea, and is a guiding light to those whose business is upon it; therefore she is especially the sailor's friend. The second, written at Rydal, touches an old superstition connected with lunar worship, and urges that, though its forms have disappeared, its spirit should be retained,—

> "May sage and simple, catching with one eye
> The moral intimations of the sky,
> Learn from thy course . . .
> To keep with faithful step the appointed way,
> Eclipsing or eclipsed, by night or day,
> And from example of thy monthly range
> Gently to brook decline and fatal change. . . ."

Later Tours.

Such poetry, if it were not Wordsworth's, would be accounted high. It is melodious and thoughtful, and the "moral intimations" which it conveys, if not strikingly original, are at least lofty and convincing. But we feel at once that the light has disappeared which made Wordsworth's vision unique among poets. We feel it as we read the rest of these *Evening Voluntaries*, with their common conclusion in direct prayer. We feel it again as we follow the poet in his travels, in 1833 to Scotland once more, and in 1837 to Italy. Of the eight-and-forty pieces in the former group all except three are sonnets. The most notable of the three is xxvii., *Written in a Blank Leaf of Macpherson's Ossian*, a work of attempted reconstruction which Wordsworth here and elsewhere condemns; while of the sonnets, those inspired by Iona (xxxii. to xxxv.), with its memorials and

its forgetfulness of Adamnan, and xxxvii., reverting to the daisy of Burns,

> "That, by the unwilling ploughshare, died to prove
> The tender charm of poetry and love,"

are, perhaps, most worthy of mention.

The Italian tour, taken in companionship with Henry Crabb Robinson, "was shortened by report, too well founded, of the prevalence of cholera at Naples. To make some amends," Wordsworth continues, "for what was reluctantly left unseen in the South of Italy, we visited the Tuscan sanctuaries among the Apennines, and the principal Italian lakes among the Alps." Thus, to some extent, the steps of the friends retraced Wordsworth's earlier tour of 1820.

The interest of this journey centres at the poet's visit to Rome. There is a long piece of preliminary *Musings*, in which echoes from the history of the Everlasting City fleet before Wordsworth's mind, mingled with the thought of his own old age, spared for the sight of these splendours. And chiefly, through the memories of Cicero and Horace and Virgil, and "downward through that bright dream of commonwealths, each city a starlike seat of rival glory,"* the story of the later Rome stands out, when the seven hills became the vicarage of the Christian Church. For the poet who had, as we shall shortly see, written a kind of ecclesiastical epos, was anxious, above all, to revive the historic sense, and, without any leanings to Romanism, to claim for the English Church her share in Roman antiquity. Poetry and piety he went to Rome to find, in that spirit of pilgrim's reverence which must touch the veriest tourist in her streets. These *Musings*, therefore, near Aquapendente,

* vii. 11-13.

in the "dear neighbourhood" of a "flowering broom," that brought back memories of home and of "The Wizard of the North" who saw Italy, and died, end with a fine anticipation of delight,—

> "Let us now
> Rise, and to-morrow greet magnificent Rome."

The morrow brought disappointment, for the reality fell below the ideal. "Is this, ye gods, the Capitolian Hill?" is, after all, the poet's greeting, and succeeding sonnets go on to plead for everything that tradition, everything that superstition can lend to preserve the memory of the city from the dry-as-dust disillusion of its ruins. "Assent is power, belief the soul of fact," is Wordsworth's reply to the destructive research spirit of *Niebuhr and other modern Historians* (iv.). But presently, this message of defiance is recalled. Let the majesty of truth prevail over the flatteries of fiction, let historians profane every consecrated romance (vi.), and still "the whole theme" of Rome will survive, a monument more enduring than brass (vii.). The apology in xi., the tenth sonnet of the sequence, *From the Alban Hills, looking towards Rome*, came promptly and complete:

> "Forgive, illustrious Country! these deep sighs, . . .
> . . . Thy fortunes, twice exalted, might provoke
> Verse to glad notes prophetic of the hour
> When thou, uprisen, shalt break thy double yoke,
> And enter, with prompt aid from the Most High,
> On the third stage of thy great destiny" (i. 10-4).

For Wordsworth in Italy is not moved, like Mommsen, to a *ne plus ultra* of Cæsar-worship, nor touched, like Ruskin or Symonds, to re-create the morning of art; but rather the spirit of all the ages seems to settle upon his thought, with

something of that penetrative optimism which delighted us in his earlier days. His vision of the Eternal City is a vision of faith, in which an excelling sense of the immortal quality of human greatness and endeavour unifies and transcends the several periods of her history. The human spectacle predominates, and Wordsworth, *After leaving Italy* (xxv.), with the dreary sight of Lago Morto in his eyes, repeats the same strong note:

> "Italia! on the surface of thy spirit
> (Too aptly emblemed by that torpid lake)
> Shall a few partial breezes only creep?—
> Be its depths quickened; what thou dost inherit
> Of the world's hopes, dare to fulfil; awake,
> Mother of Heroes, from thy death-like sleep!" (8-14).

And Wordsworth's whole attitude in travel is perhaps most succinctly given in a letter from Henry Crabb Robinson (his companion on this tour) to Mr Grosart, the editor of Wordsworth's Prose Works. The letter (Grosart, III. 433) is dated from 30 Russell Square, 1850, and speaking of the *Musings near Aquapendente*, the writer remarks,—"As he himself repeatedly said of the journey, 'It is too late.' 'I have matter for volumes,' he said once, 'had I but youth to work it up.' It is remarkable how in this admirable poem meditation predominates over observation. . . . It was a remark justly made on the Memorials of the Swiss journey of 1820, that Mr W. left unnoticed the great objects which have given rise to innumerable commonplace verses and huge piles of bad prose, and which everybody talks about, while he dwelt on impressions peculiar to himself. As a reproach, nothing can be more idle and unmeaning. I expected it would be so with these latter poems, and so I found it." Indeed, the first object at Rome which struck on Wordsworth's sensibility was a

solitary pine-tree on the Pincian hill, which the generosity and taste of Sir George Beaumont, his old friend, had pensioned from destruction by the axe.

But if the "youth to work it up" and the magic of the youthful touch were wanting to Wordsworth on his travels, yet a great man's powers cannot decay without compensation. More and more, as Wordsworth grew to distrust his capacity for a sustained effort of song, more and more, as the pathos of the "it is too late" kept his music in reserve, a certain stateliness of diction succeeded, which expressed itself chiefly in the sonnet. His model in this metre was Milton, and the record of this is so characteristic that the incident may be quoted in his own words: "In the cottage of Town-end, one afternoon in 1801, my sister read to me the sonnets of Milton. I had long been well acquainted with them, but I was particularly struck on that occasion with the dignified simplicity and majestic harmony that runs through most of them—in character so totally different from the Italian, and still more so from Shakespeare's fine sonnets. I took fire, if I may be allowed to say so, and produced three sonnets the same afternoon—the first I ever wrote, except an irregular one at school." The qualities which are here distinguished were frequently reproduced by Wordsworth, but his sonnets, both in character and number, occupy a unique place in the history of that measure. Milton's own examples, only eighteen in all, seldom present the frugality of rhyme, the accurate division of sense between octave and sextad, or the summary conclusion of Italian and Shakespearian tradition, and Wordsworth, in his nearly five hundred sonnets, enlarged on his master's privileges. An elaborate analysis has shown that, though the earlier instances exhibit great technical correctness, yet, as this

measure became his chief instrument of expression, he considerably modified its artifices and rules.* And in the relaxed form which it assumed, by the "intense unity" of presentation which it secured, by its tutored dignity of sound, as well as by the negative excellence which Samuel Rogers pointed out of preventing the wordiness to which the poet was prone, Wordsworth's sonnet is the supreme creation of the autumn of his life, and reflects, as in a polished mirror, the hues of that period, glorious though in decay. For his later style, as it has been somewhat fallaciously called, was only the contraction of his earlier energies. He became, not more religious, but more distinctively Christian. His sister, for instance, revising in 1832 the Scotch tour of 1803, regrets that it began and ended on a Sunday. He became, too, not less democratic, but more distinctively conservative; not a better patriot, but a more literal Englander; and this added definitiveness in many departments of opinion brought with it a stiffening of numbers and a concentration of vision. It brought with it, in a word, the Wordsworthian sonnet.

Ecclesiastical Sonnets.

The longest outcome of the later style was the series in three parts of 132 *Ecclesiastical Sonnets.* It is not necessary here to dwell at any length on Wordsworth's historic sympathy with Church Establishment or his timid opposition to Catholic Emancipation.† Despite his essential religiousness, which kept him, even in the worst days of the reaction from the Terror, as far from Shelley's atheism as from Coleridge's metaphysical mists, despite even his increased respect for

* See a paper by the Rev. T. Hutchinson on *The Structure of the Wordsworthian Sonnet*, Transactions of the Wordsworth Society, vol. 2.

† Cp. Chapter v., p. 163, *infra.*

doctrine as the years went on, Wordsworth's Christianity was always, so to speak, vicarious. The moral and conserving value of a church—and, *à fortiori*, of *the* church traditionally established,—its value as a centre of spiritual influence, as a channel of ascetic aspiration, its value not least as a literal feature in the landscape, was always present to Wordsworth's mind. But the spirit and the *ascêsis*, the renunciation and the practice, were less to his purpose than the outward body with which they were informed. Less to his purpose,—because Wordsworth's later mood was, above all, didactic. He had spent his manhood in a passionate endeavour to interpret the beauty of the world to a generation of Peter Bells. The realisation of the vision was a question of conduct, and his old age was devoted to winning the social and political environment best fitted for its display. His attitude, therefore, towards the Church was that of the politician and the social reformer, not that of the saint; his interest in it was objective, based upon history rather than upon religion. In all this there is no ground for complaint. That Wordsworth was not George Herbert, that the epicist of the Church was not pre-eminently a Christian, nor the martyrologist himself a martyr, detracted indeed from the contagious quality of the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, but cannot lessen their value as a historical plea for local religious observances. It cannot unmake that unique experiment to win the philosopher's assent to the worship of the people, and the share of the people in the tranquillity of the philosophers. It cannot reverse the complete success with which the country-side pastorage is sketched, like a tree with deep shadows, its branches embracing the land, it roots winding about antiquity, and its summit pointing to heaven. Nor can it unwrite the majestic sonnet *Mutability* (III. xxxiv.),

nor the triad inspired by the *Inside of King's College Chapel* — (III. xliii.-v.).

The pity is, that the intensely conservative inspiration of the series answered to a strain of narrowness which surprises us in the aging poet. He has accustomed us so long to a universalisation of the individual, he has fused so successfully the limitations of life in the reconciling harmonies of eternity, an eternity unorthodox only in its approaches, for the God of Nature's temple is one with the God of the Church,—that, when it comes to a question of particular means, we had forgotten the narrowness which is logically required. Yet it is consistent enough, at least until the Platonic dream is realised, and our statesmen are philosophers, not in some circumscribed district alone, Protestant England or another, but in an ideal Republic whose bounds shall be co-extensive with the world. To have idealised England, and to have hedged his idol about from every source of outside contamination, may have been unpractical on Wordsworth's part; but that is the statesmen's fault, not the philosophers'. It marks our distance from the ideal, but the ideal remains, clearly defined beyond the valley of the shadow:

> "Look forth!—that Stream behold,
> That Stream upon whose bosom we have passed,
> Floating at ease, while nations have effaced
> Nations, and Death has gathered to his fold
> Long lines of mighty Kings—look forth, my soul!
> (Nor in this vision be thou slow to trust)
> The living waters, less and less by guilt
> Stained and polluted, brighten as they roll,
> Till they have reached the eternal City—built
> For the perfected Spirits of the just." *

* *Conclusion*, E. S., III. xlvii. For the access of Conservatism here remarked upon, see the next chapter in connection with Wordsworth's political prose writings.

The River Duddon.

The *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, begun in 1821, and worked at for many succeeding years, was not the first attempt which Wordsworth had made to present the different aspects of a single theme in the form of a sonnet sequence. In 1820, he dedicated to his brother, Dr Wordsworth, thirty-four sonnets to *The River Duddon*, an unpretentious stream which, as is stated in the introductory note, rises "on the confines of Westmoreland, Cumberland, and Lancashire: and, having served as a boundary to the two last counties for the space of about twenty-five miles, enters the Irish Sea, between the Isle of Walney and the Lordship of Millum." It is a curious coincidence, just worthy of mention, that the scheme of the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* trespassed upon Southey's projected prose history of the Church in England, while that of the River Duddon trespassed upon Coleridge's intended poem "The Brook."

This series is more attractive than the former. Though the sonnets were written at different times—the fourteenth, for instance, was the first composed—they exhibit at once more variety and more cohesion than those devoted to the Church. The succession of interest is not forced by copulative "buts" and "fors" and "ands"; it flows evenly, like the river itself. Wordsworth, too, was happier in his subject. Duddon became to him a living companion, rich with sympathies and subtle suggestions in the lore of nature for the learning of man. Duddon's scenery, again, beautifully described in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and twentieth sonnets, and commemorated hardly less beautifully in the note to the seventeenth and eighteenth,* had been long familiar to him, with the familiarity that induces

* Begin at the words, "After all, the traveller would be most gratified." A fine passage of prose succeeds.

understanding. Pious pilgrims in the poet's footsteps have identified every reference and cleared up every allusion in these poems; but, whether studied geographically or read poetically, the Duddon sonnets have always taken high rank among Wordsworth's productions. Since the potamic stage of civilisation, in the favourite phrase of a certain school of historians, a river has always held romance for the children of men. Its cloudy origin, its troubled youth, its tranquil manhood, flowing towards the sea, are typical of the course of human life. And it writes our history no less than our philosophy, for it is the highway of intercourse and commerce in peace and war, controlling the destinies of the peoples on its banks. If Nile, or Tiber, or Rhine, or Neva is romantic in this wise, why not Duddon in its own degree? Those to whom the incantation of Wordsworth is a familiar message will see the truer appropriateness in his choice of a less-known theme, will look to him for a deeper meaning than their own sense could read, and will find—from the *Dedication* to the *After-thought*—Wordsworth once more revealed in these poems as the priest of nature and the prophet of man. It is at least significant that *The Monthly Review*, which, in August, 1819, spoke of the author of *Peter Bell* as "this infatuated poetaster," and in September, 1819, spoke of the author of *The Waggoner* as "the Prince of Poetical Burlesque," was pleased in October, 1820, to notice the *River Duddon* volume in terms of respectful appreciation.*

* Wordsworth's reputation passed through other vicissitudes in the hands of the *Monthly* reviewer. In 1799, "so much genius and originality" were discovered in the *Lyrical Ballads*, that their author was encouraged to continue. In 1815 (Feb. and Nov.), the *Excursion*, the *Poems*, and the *White Doe* were severely criticised and condemned. Finally, in June 1842, *à propos* of the *Poems, Chiefly of Early and Late Years*, a retrospect was made, and a complete recantation effected.—See p. 41, *supra*.

Nature abroad, the Church in history, a river as philosophy, these are all aspects of Wordsworth's message. But the reader who has followed the poet so far, who has noted how intimately his "natural religion" was bound up with his national patriotism, who has discovered that what lay nearest to the poet's heart was not nature divorced from man but man re-created by nature, will have awaited some clearer strain, some direct cry to the England which he loved, some final utterance, not descriptive nor discursive, but of lyric intensity and lyric passion. It will have been possible to gather from what has been seen of Wordsworth's works his aspirations for his country, but the works would have seemed incomplete had he not put together for us the sum and substance of his desires.

Poems, etc., Dedicated to Liberty.

In the seventy-four *Poems dedicated to National Independence and Liberty*, and in the later fourteen *Sonnets dedicated to Liberty and Order*, we have this transference effected in lyric guise,—nature's ordered joy and responsible freedom transferred to the England of to-day. And this, the last great division of the master's poetry, must be viewed as a kind of consummation. Love comes to men in different ways, and Wordsworth's love was of diviner fabric than the passions of the flesh. It is hardly fanciful to say, that, in him, Nature was the Bride of humanity, and the fruit was social order. These poems to liberty become then, in a sense, the love-songs of Wordsworth. They exhibit the various phases of that consuming passion, its doubts, its longings, its gratitude, its despair, as clearly as in Catullus himself. And if it be objected, in the poet's dispraise, that his love was unhuman and cold, Virgil's precedent recurs, who gave us,

as hero, Æneas the Good, wedded to an equally remote ideal, but toiling as men toil, and suffering as men suffer for the passionless passion which he bore. It is granted to few to revive in their own heart the white flower of chivalry; for to most men the love of country and the passion for humanity come tempered and turned to prose by the engines of political science. But to Wordsworth, purged in the fires of the Revolution, the passion and the love came lyrically free. He once compared a sonnet to a dew-drop, and these poems to liberty bear out his simile. Some are shed by hope in the morning of her rising; some glisten with the evening light; some fall like the tears of the labouring noon.

The first part contains twenty-six sonnets, a rhymed poem and an ode. The majority of the former belong to the years 1802-3, and breathe, in alternate strains of tenderness and exhortation, the poet's love for England. The five, especially, numbered xiii. to xvii., written in London in the autumn of 1802, are alive for all time with genuine patriotism. xiii. laments the decay of simple virtue and the dress for show that modern life had assumed. xiv. is the magnificent invocation of the spirit of Milton, with his Puritan consecration of "life's common way." xv. is the exaltation of England at the expense of France,—"Great men have been among us," . . . but "France, 'tis strange, hath brought forth no such souls as we had then." xvi. pursues that source of encouragement; a nation which has been so great can never utterly perish,—"we must be free or die, who speak the tongue that Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals hold which Milton held;" and xvii., perhaps the most beautiful in the group, is the Poet's apology to England, his mistress, for his momentary distrust,—

> "For dearly must we prize thee; we who find
> In thee a bulwark for the cause of men;
> And I by my affection was beguiled:
> What wonder if a Poet now and then,
> Among the many movements of his mind,
> Felt for thee as a lover or a child!"

France's treatment of Switzerland and Sweden, and Napoleon's revealed meanness had made a terrible impression upon Wordsworth, and several sonnets in the present collection are devoted to these themes. Those of 1803, for instance, xviii. to xxvi., are a stern indictment of the sinful country and her little great leader, "with mighty nations for his underlings," who had so shamefully declined from the ideal use of power, and were coming now,

> "Impatient to put out the only light
> Of Liberty that yet remains on earth."

And England, Liberty's last stronghold, is again appealed to in stirring language not to be below her trust. xii., *Thought of a Briton on the Subjection of Switzerland*, and vi., *On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic*, are too well known to require quotation here. In them, indeed, Wordsworth touched the highest point in the style which was avowedly fired by "Milton's dignified simplicity and majestic harmony."

Both here and in the forty-two sonnets and four odes of Part II., Wordsworth's service to history and liberty is unique in kind. It is not possible to follow this second series in detail. It makes excursions into antiquity (i., ii., vi.), to Spain (vii., viii., xxvi.-xxxiii.), to the Tyrol (ix. and following), and to Russia (xxxiv.-xxxvi.), and concludes with the notorious *Thanksgiving Ode* of January 18, 1816. Where the history of these years preceded, Wordsworth followed; where liberty was contested, her lover went. He held up for our imitation a standard of public honour, equally un-

susceptible of compromise with the private honour of each man; and the point where these poems are remarkable is in their relation to the democratic idea of our age. Wordsworth, as we have seen more than once, founded the rule of the people upon a revolution of conduct. He had risen to the height of the lesson of 1789, freed of the mistakes of the Convention and purged of the Terror. He saw that its practical moral effect was the enfranchisement of the disinherited of all previous democratic ideals.* The basis of happiness was extended, and its local limits were enlarged. In other poems, as we have seen, Wordsworth set himself to illustrate this principle at work, in nature, in society, or in the individual, but here, and now, we get the assertion of the principle. The national honour is bound to uphold it ("Say, what is Honour?—'Tis the finest sense of *justice* which the human mind can frame" xvii. 1-2).† Art and wealth and the industrial peace that promote them, aims of democracy to which Wordsworth fully subscribed, are to be postponed to this corner-stone of the democratic house,—liberty for one and all. This, very briefly, is the contribution which Wordsworth's present series of poems makes to the page of history. It interprets for succeeding generations the true lesson of the French Revolution, and crowns the conqueror of Napoleon as the guardian of this creed. The fourteen additional sonnets of his old age, *To Liberty and Order*, are composed in the same spirit, and give the same call to conduct.

The Punishment of Death.

No great value attaches to the series of fourteen sonnets, belonging to 1840, and designed as a defence of Capital Punishment. They are interesting, however, from the point of view of Wordsworth's opinions, for their tendency is directly in favour of

* Cp. Chapter I., pp. 17-20, *supra*.

† Cp. The Convention of Cintra. Grosart, *Prose Works*, i. 77.

the theory of State Socialism; Wordsworth justifies the extreme penalty of the law, not only on the ground of its greater humanity, as more merciful, and, in a sense, more religious than perpetual imprisonment ("leaving the final issue in *His* hands"), but also on the ground of the State, as a universal conception, transcending the limits of its individual parts. Social order cannot be attained unless this theory be practically asserted. In this particular issue, as in the wider principle itself, the liberty of Wordsworth's democratic idea was based on order, not on anarchy.

Miscellaneous Sonnets.

There remain for mention the three series of unclassed sonnets, in which Wordsworth included some of his most polished gems. Perhaps, if selection be invited, the one which bears most directly on Wordsworth's art is the thirty-first of Part II., "Brook! whose society the Poet seeks." It might have been put as preface to the Duddon series, giving, as it does, the peculiar attitude with which Wordsworth approached nature. In contrast especially to Keats, who revived the Hellenistic spirit in modern poetry, Wordsworth rejected the Greek point of view, which peopled the shows of nature with anthropomorphic imaginings. For him, the whole theogony of dryads in trees, and naiads in streams, and echoes in mountains, was vicious and false, in that it deceived the unifying vision, and split up into a thousand attractive shapes the single informing spirit.* It was only in a moment of mental and spiritual exhaustion that Wordsworth relapsed into pantheistic Paganism. (Pt. I.,

* "The grand storehouses of enthusiastic and meditative imagination, of poetical, as contra-distinguished from human and dramatic imagination, are the prophetic and lyrical parts of the Holy Scriptures, and the works of Milton; to which I cannot forbear to add those of Spenser. I select these writers in preference to those of ancient

xxxiii.,—"The world is too much with us.") With this rejection is to be included the absence in Wordsworth's poetry of that modern development of Pagan anthropomorphism, which Ruskin called "the pathetic fallacy." Wordsworth seldom or never read his private joys and sorrows reflected on the face of nature. Tennyson's *Lotos-eaters* may be taken as a *locus classicus* of this practice; the human and the scenic elements are fused in a single mood. I would select, too, the third of the second series, *To B. R. Haydon* ("High is our calling, Friend!—"), where the poet confesses to the painter the stress of emotion in which his work is composed. This sonnet and the following may be compared, in their conscious dignity and responsive meekness, to the eighth of Sir Joshua Reynolds' Discourses on Art. II. xxxvi., *Composed upon Westminster Bridge, Sept.* 3, 1802 ("Earth has not anything to show more fair"), is justly famous for its beauty, and is interesting, too, from another point of view. Wordsworth's attitude towards London was never very deeply inspired. His residence there before the Revolution produced little more than a "country cousin's" sensations. After his return from Paris, at the end of 1792, he was more or less a stranger in the city, and its attraction to him was in its position as the centre of political affairs, rather than in any romance of its own. *The Reverie of Poor Susan*, in whose vision

> "Bright volumes of vapour through Lothbury glide,
> And a river flows on through the vale of Cheapside,"

Greece and Rome, because the anthropomorphitism of the Pagan religion subjected the minds of the greatest poets of those countries too much to the bondage of definite form; from which the Hebrews were preserved by their abhorrence of idolatry. . . . Our great epic Poet . . was a Hebrew in soul." Preface to *Poems*, 1815.

is the most inspired utterance provoked. It is characteristic, therefore, that the present fine sonnet should be of London at rest, not in its ceaseless motion. The three poems *To Sleep*, (I. xii.-xiv.), have already been mentioned in another connection; * they breathe the spirit of repose. More directly bearing on the poet's work is I. xvii., "A poem came forth of late, called Peter Bell," modelled on Milton's sonnet on the Tetrachordon, and retorting the author's indifference to the ignorant censure of his critics. It is one of the very few instances where Wordsworth showed, not resentment so much as any notice at all of the revilings which had been showered upon him. His more common reply was a deference in the minutiæ, and an indifference in the essentials of his art. Finally, we may select as an example of Wordsworth's own critical faculty, united with perfect numbers, the first of Part II., in which the defence of the sonnet is attempted as it was employed by Shakespeare, Petrarch, Tasso, Camöens, Dante, Spenser, and Milton. To this noble roll, nobly commemorated, Wordsworth's name must be added. In the twenty-eighth poem of Part III. he has given the best description of his power. Comparing the splendid ecstasies and moments of poetry to the forms and hues of the western clouds at sunset, he renounces the attendant pomp for the fear of the storms it implies:

> "Not loth to thank each moment for its boon
> Of pure delight, come whencesoe'er it may,
> Peace let us seek,—to steadfast things attune
> Calm expectations, leaving to the gay
> And volatile their love of transient bowers,
> The house that cannot pass away be ours."

With this we may fitly leave the poetical works of

* See p. 52, *supra*.

Wordsworth. Those to whom the peace of the permanent amid things passing makes ample atonement for the shifting pleasures it puts by, will rise to the height of this concluding aspiration. The house that has not passed away is his.

CHAPTER V

THE PROSE WORKS

WORDSWORTH's prose writings supply a running commentary on his verse. I have already referred at some length to the so-called *Apology for the French Revolution* (letter to the Bishop of Llandaff), which was written in London in 1793.* Apart from the interest of the circumstances of its composition, the pamphlet may delay us here a moment more to consider the merit of its argument. In the part of *The Prelude* touching that date, or a little earlier, Wordsworth exclaims,

Foreign Politics.

> "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
> But to be young was very heaven !—Oh ! times
> In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
> Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
> The attraction of a country in romance !" (xi. 108).

The Letter in question was obviously written while the white heat of passionate life was strongly upon the poet. We can watch, if we read it carefully, the struggle between logic and enthusiasm, between Wordsworth's sense of glorious youth and his desire to be reasonably convincing, —in a word, between Beaupuy's proselyte and the Bishop's opponent. Accordingly, the process of argument is formal and precise ; the argument itself is indignant and dogmatic. Capitals and italics are not seldom used ; the eternal nature of man, in one or another form, is a constant subject of

* See Chapter I., p. 16, *supra*. Grosart is responsible for the title in italics.

appeal; and the compromise of interests, inevitable to all political systems, is persistently ignored.

A similar "impossibility" has been held to characterise the Tractate *on the Convention of Cintra.* Judging it as an ephemeral production, the criticism is no doubt just. This document of 137 large octavo pages is condemned by its very title, "Concerning the relations of Great Britain, Spain and Portugal, . . . the whole brought to the test of those Principles, by which alone the Independence and Freedom of Nations can be Preserved or Recovered." As a serious contribution to the politics of 1808-9, such an essay was a farce. A Board of Inquiry was held on the share taken by Sir Arthur Wellesley and his colleagues in drawing up the agreement for the evacuation of Portugal by the French troops, and of the preliminary suspension of arms. The report of that Board had been a reserved judgment as to the fitness of the Convention itself, but a unanimous vote of confidence, on the other hand, in "the unquestionable zeal and firmness" displayed by the English Generals. There, in common fairness and patriotism, the matter should have rested. Not even poets should rush in where Boards of Inquiry fear to tread,—least of all, it might seem, a poet taking the pedestrian way of prose. It is typical of Wordsworth's earnestness that the objection never even struck him. Here was an obvious violation of the principles of conduct which it had been his poetic mission to construct; it appeared to him his plain duty to drag the events before the bar of those principles. In other words, his vision of the ideal was so intense as to obscure its practical tactlessness. His idealism knew no expediency;—"I could not love thee, dear, so much, loved I not honour more," Wordsworth said, in effect to his country, and, at

this distance of time, we may condone the tactical error for the chivalric virtue which provoked it. For, in this view, the memory of the poet is unassailed by censure. This treatise is, and was, a literary excursion into the field of politics. It is, to use a hackneyed term, an academic essay, remote, and of the schools. The events in Portugal and the men who directed them are used for purposes of experimentation, but, for the rest, it relates to an international policy,

> "wholly lost
> To the general sense of men, by chains confined
> Of business, care, or pleasure, or resigned
> To timely sleep." *

Regarding the treatise, therefore, as an essay in constructive justice, it is well worth reading. The stages of that revulsion of feeling, through which Wordsworth and many of his countrymen had passed since he apologised for the French Revolution, are clearly expressed, and give the clue to the mood in which, for instance, *Guilt and Sorrow* and *The Borderers* were composed:

> "There are promptings of wisdom from the penetralia of human nature, which a people can hear, though the wisest of their practical statesmen be deaf towards them. This authentic voice, the people of England had heard and obeyed: and, in opposition to French tyranny growing daily more insatiate and implacable, they ranged themselves zealously under their government; though they neither forgot nor forgave its transgressions, in having first involved them in a war with a people then struggling for its own liberties under a twofold infliction—confounded by inbred faction, and beleaguered by a cruel and imperious external foe. But these remembrances did not vent themselves in reproaches, nor hinder us from being reconciled to our Rulers, when a change or rather a revolution in circumstances had imposed new duties; and, in

* See the *Poems to National Independence and Liberty*, Part II., vii. and viii., where Wordsworth acknowledges that the present Tract was composed aloof from "the World's vain objects."

defiance of local and personal clamour, it may be safely said, that the nation united heart and hand with the Government in its resolve to meet the worst, rather than stoop its head to receive that which, it was felt, would not be the garland but the yoke of peace. Yet it was an afflicting alternative; . . . Our condition savoured too much of a grinding constraint—too much of the vassalage of necessity. . . . We desponded, though we did not despair. In fact, a deliberate and preparatory fortitude—a sedate and stern melancholy, which had no sunshine and was exhilarated only by the lightnings of indignation—this was the highest and best state of moral feeling to which the most noble-minded among us could attain.

But, from the moment of the rising of the people of the Pyrenëan peninsula, there was a mighty change; we were instantaneously animated; and, from that moment, the contest assumed the dignity, which it is not in the power of anything but hope to bestow: and, if I may dare to transfer language, prompted by a revelation of the state of being that admits not of decay or change, to the concerns and interests of our transitory planet, from that moment 'this corruptible put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality.'"

It will not be denied that this fine passage of prose, and the following sentences which describe the glow of hope and brotherhood in which Spain and England joined forces, are an enlightened commentary on the successive emotions provoked by Pitt's declaration of war. In no estimate of those troubled times should Wordsworth's record be forgotten.

Historically, too, considerable value attaches to the noble eulogy of the Spanish people, fired by a single desire for liberty. Their wrongs are eloquently stated; "their consolation, their resolves, and their hopes" are yet more thrillingly confirmed. The romance of the land, and of the cities whose names are music, is pressed into the service of the writer. Against this grand array of justice, Wordsworth represents the Convention of Cintra as an act of treachery on England's part. I would refer

you, too, to the pages dealing with the quality of "intellectual courage," for lack of which "grievous errors were committed by Sir Hew Dalrymple and his colleagues." It is the quality of generalship which we have met before in the *Character of the Happy Warrior*,* who, as it is written here, "will have a firm mind in whatever embarrassment he may be placed; will look steadily at the most undefined shapes of difficulty and danger, of possible mistake or mischance; nor will they appear to him more formidable than they really are. For *his* attention is not distracted—he has but one business, and that is with the object before him. Neither in general conduct nor in particular emergencies, are *his* plans subservient to considerations of rewards, estate, or title; these are not to have precedence in his thoughts, to govern his actions, but to follow in the train of his duty." And the British Generals, Wordsworth asserts, who had wanted this intellectual courage in regard to their means, were guilty of "worse blindness in regard to ends. . . . The evacuation of Portugal was not the prime object, but the manner in which that event was to be brought about. . . . We combated for victory in the empire of reason, for strongholds in the imagination. Lisbon and Portugal, as city and soil, were chiefly prized by us as a *language*; but our Generals mistook the counters of the game for the stake played at." The political indiscretion—for Lisbon and Portugal, it is true, were not made to speak the language of justice—is immaterial to-day; the eloquence and the high purpose of the writer remain.

The eloquence touches a still loftier level, when Wordsworth shows how the action of England must have been received in Spain:—

* See Chapter III., p. 114, *supra*.

> "O Sorrow! O misery for England, the land of liberty and courage and peace; the land trustworthy and long approved; the home of lofty example and benign precept; the central orb to which, as to a fountain, the nations of the earth 'ought to repair, and in their golden urns draw light';—O sorrow and shame for our country; for the grass which is upon her fields, and the dust which is in her graves; for her good men who now look upon the day; and her long train of deliverers and defenders, her Alfred, her Sidneys, and her Milton; whose voice yet speaketh for our reproach; and whose actions survive in memory to confound us, or to redeem!
>
> "For what hath been done? look at it: we have looked at it: we have handled it: we have pondered it steadily: we have tried it by the principles of absolute and eternal justice; by the sentiments of high-minded honour, both with reference to their general nature, and to their special exaltation under present circumstances; by the rules of expedience; by the maxims of prudence, civil and military: we have weighed it in the balance of all these, and found it wanting; in that which is most excellent most wanting."

It is for the historian to decide whether the occasion was adequate to such an outburst, and in his decision we must acquiesce. But for Wordsworth's critics it is enough to know that his prose was as eloquent as its informing spirit was sincere.

The conclusion of the Tractate is of especial interest, because it states more clearly than elsewhere, Wordsworth's tutored conviction that the charters of a nation are as dust in the balance, if there be no freedom from within; that "commerce, manufactures, agriculture, and all the peaceful arts, are of the nature of virtues or intellectual powers: they cannot be given; they cannot be stuck in here and there; they must spring up; they must grow of themselves"; that the moral qualities upon which he lays such stress are not for exceptional use, but for habitual employment, in little things as well as in great: "The outermost and all-embracing circle of benevolence has

inward, concentric circles which, like those of the spider's web, are bound together by links, and rest upon each other; making one frame, and capable of one tremor; circles narrower and narrower, closer and closer, as they lie more near to the centre of self from which they proceeded, and which sustains the whole. . . . The higher mode of being does not exclude, but necessarily includes, the lower; the intellectual does not exclude, but necessarily includes, the sentient; the sentient, the animal; and the animal, the vital—to its lowest degrees." *

Finally, I select from this inspiring essay, a few of the great maxims which illuminate its pages,—general truths more valuable than the conclusions of contemporary politics, and the more forcible, perhaps, because detached from their context. The reader of the Tract will easily add to their number:

"All knowledge of human nature leads ultimately to repose."

"Still to be talking of bestowing and conferring, and to be happy in the sight of nothing but what he thinks he has bestowed or conferred, this, in a man to whom the weakness of his fellows has given great power, is a madness of pride more hideous than cruelty."

"When the people speaks loudly, it is from being strongly possessed either by the Godhead or the Demon; and he, who cannot discover the true spirit from the false, hath no ear for profitable communion."

"Riddance, mere riddance—safety, mere safety—are objects far too defined, too inert and passive in their own nature, to have ability either to rouze or to sustain. . . . All courage is a projection from ourselves; however short-lived, it is a motion of hope."

* See pp. 18 and 79, *supra*.

"Power of mind is wanting, where there is power of place."

"Talk not of the perishable nature of enthusiasm; and rise above a craving for perpetual manifestations of things. He is to be pitied whose eye can only be pierced by the light of a meridian sun, whose frame can only be warmed by the heat of midsummer."

"The true sorrow of humanity consists in this;—not that the mind of man fails; but that the course and demands of action and of life so rarely correspond with the dignity and intensity of human desires."

Domestic Politics.

With the treatise on the Convention of Cintra, Wordsworth's more direct interest in politics abroad practically came to an end. He retained his historical sympathy with the traditions of great nations; he retained, too, that ardent devotion to the cause of justice which made every moral inequality his special prey; but—as we saw in the first chapter—towards the first few years of this century, the poet withdrew more and more to the solitude of his home among the hills. He was contented to see the universe in miniature; or—to adopt his own metaphor—from a narrow and inner circle of benevolence, he watched the sympathetic tremors of outward and concentric circles. Accordingly, the next political utterance of any importance which Wordsworth gave to the world consists of two *Addresses to the Freeholders of Westmoreland* (Kendal, 1818), portions of which originally appeared in the *Kendal Chronicle* and the *Carlisle Patriot.* In that year, Lord Brougham and Vaux, then known as Mr Henry Brougham, was for the first time contesting the representation of the county. He was unsuccessful then and twice afterwards, the third occasion being in 1826. It is not necessary here to enter into the various problems of

provincial politics at this date (1818), in order to explain Wordsworth's disposition to Lord Brougham. There is more satisfaction in learning, from the Greville Memoirs, that the poet and the politician eventually came to appreciate one another aright. But beyond the personal and local reasons which led Wordsworth to support the nomination of both Members of Parliament for his district from the House of Lowther, these Addresses are at least of interest as a statement of the attitude of the Tory free-holders towards Reform before the date of the Reform Bills. The fight has been fought, and the ominous apprehensions of the timid are long since forgotten; but to Wordsworth, as to many others in those years, it seemed more prudent to educate the electorate before enfranchising it,—"to walk—to wind—towards a thing that is coveted" rather than to leap upon it at once.

In this spirit the Poet had already turned his attention to the ethical aspect of domestic politics. In 1809, Mathetes * had sent to the editor of *The Friend*—Coleridge's paper—a letter in which he set forth the paralysing danger to generous youth, on entering the world, of an education which has trained, in the noblest examples, the faculties of love and admiration. Such a youth, according to Mathetes, will transfer his eager affections, brought to active use in the school of nature and antiquity, to the readiest objects at hand. Natural curiosity will complete the work which inevitable self-delusion begins. Predisposed to discover in his own age the answering object of his intellect and love, flattered by the promptness of its response, and dazzled by the glitter of its philosophy and art, such a youth will decline upon the sensuous and the

* Professor John Wilson, the "Christopher North" of *Maga*, and of his own *Noctes Ambrosianæ*.

shallow, and will lose, in this declension, his power of moral discrimination. He will exaggerate the excellences of the present and base a belief in the perpetual progress of the race on a distrust of the wisdom and a lack of reverence for the greatness of "the mighty minds of old." Such was the indictment of the modern system of education; it provoked the idealising powers of youth—and opened forthwith the doors of the world. Concluding his letter, Mathetes wrote: "If a teacher should stand up in their generation, conspicuous above the multitude in superior power, and still more in the assertion and proclamation of disregarded truth;—to him, to his cheering or summoning voice, all those would turn, whose deep sensibility has been oppressed by the indifference, or misled by the seduction, of the times. Of one such teacher, who has been given to our own age you [Coleridge] have described the power when you said, that in his annunciation of truths he seemed to speak in thunders. I believe that mighty voice has not been poured out in vain; . . . and that even now there are many to whom the name of Wordsworth calls up the recollection of their weakness and the consciousness of their strength."

Under these circumstances Coleridge entrusted to Wordsworth the task of replying in *The Friend*. The subject was congenial, the occasion welcome, and the Poet's letter is a fine piece of English. More than this, it is essentially Wordsworthian, repeating the theme of the earlier books of *The Prelude*, and generalising, for the benefit of mankind, his own experience of mental growth. He begins by pointing out Mathetes' underlying assumption that our own age is inferior to the past. If this view is mistaken—and two errors contribute to it, the illusion of "forgetting, in the excellence of what remains, the large overbalance

of worthlessness that has been swept away," and the illusion of contrasting with the shifting experience of the present, the accumulated wisdom of the past—then something of Mathetes' contention disappears. But the main part of his argument having been grounded on "the constitution of things, . . . the nature of youth, and . . . the laws that govern the growth of the faculties," this error, even if it were established, would not be fundamental. Nevertheless, Wordsworth, as a student of history and a benefactor of his species, cannot leave this side of the question without expressing his belief,—"It is enough for complacency and hope, that scattered and solitary minds are always labouring somewhere in the service of truth and virtue; and that by the sleep of the multitude the energy of the multitude may be prepared; and that by the fury of the people the chains of the people may be broken." The ingenuous youth of Mathetes' abstraction, therefore, though he happens on a period of sleep or fury, may hold without harm his creed of ultimate perfection, if his enthusiasm be of the reason and not of the senses.

Taking up at this point the parable of his correspondent, Wordsworth dwells on the advantages that youth possesses —its health, its nursery of noble deeds and words, its wealth of time—to predispose it to the higher good. "In the happy confidence of his feelings, and in the elasticity of his spirit, neither worldly ambition, nor the love of praise, nor dread of censure, nor the necessity of worldly maintenance, nor any of those causes which tempt or compel the mind habitually to look out of itself for support; neither these, nor the passions of envy, fear, hate, despondency, and the rankling of disappointed hopes (all of which, in after life, give birth to, and regulate the efforts of men, and determine their opinions) have power to preside over

the choice of the young, if the disposition be not naturally bad." Yet when the moment of choice has arrived, the doubt is not as to the "preference, but the degree of preference." How is the youth to be trained to choose, without hesitation, truth before the world? Wordsworth's answer is characteristic,—let him be "remanded to nature."

> "We have been discoursing (by implication at least) of infancy, childhood, boyhood, and youth, of pleasures lying upon the unfolding intellect plenteously as morning dew-drops,—of knowledge inhaled insensibly like the fragrance,—of dispositions stealing into the spirit like music from unknown quarters,—of images uncalled-for and rising up like exhalations,—of hopes plucked like beautiful wild flowers from the ruined tombs that border the highway of antiquity, to make a garland for a living forehead;—in a word, we have been treating of nature as a teacher of truth through joy and through gladness, and as a creatress of the faculties by a process of smoothness and delight . . . . We now apply for the succour which we need to a faculty that works after a different course; that faculty is reason; she gives more spontaneously, but she seeks for more; she works by thought through feeling; yet in thoughts she begins and ends."

To those familiar with the teaching of *The Prelude*, it is not necessary to pursue this argument further. How nature answers the appeal; how the mind, "infusing by meditation into the objects with which it converses, an intellectual life," returns to nature the gifts which she has given, made creative by contemplation and active by knowledge; how the rewards of the world are thus set in their place, as an "auxiliary motive to exertion, never the originating force;" how, if "a false Gloriana in these days imposes worthless services," the seduction is itself a blessing, in that imagination turns more innocently to truth when it has proved the hollowness of falsehood; how "the wisdom of patience waiting with pleasure" is at once the moral law and the active principle of life;—

this is the trumpet-call of Wordsworth to his age, the rationale of his own experience, the defence of hope and the exhortation to conduct.

In an Appendix to the 1835 volume of his poetry (*Yarrow Revisited, etc.*), Wordsworth recurred more immediately to the economic and social problems of the day. The appendix is little more than a glorified note, the first part of which—written in qualified support of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834,—is a somewhat hysterical cry in favour of State intervention for the relief of the indigent, in preference to private benevolence. It is hinted that the implicit compromise with individualism, which established a workhouse test for able-bodied paupers, was a retrograde movement on the part of the nation to whom the abolition of the slave trade was due. The second part carries more weight, as a plea, occasioned by the condition of Factory labour, for joint-stock companies, and the co-operative principle. Wordsworth would correct the democratic and republican tendency of such movements by encouraging the feudal spirit and widening the influence of the church. The last division of this excursus is devoted to the latter topic. "Pluralities" are defended, as protecting the existence of curates, to whose inexperience a dependent position is an advantage, by whose youth, on the other hand, fresh vigour and enthusiasm are imported into the incumbency. The "tinge of secularity," which the inequalities of clergymen's incomes was said to produce, is indicated as a temporal means to spiritual ends. Impoverishment would degrade the social level of the class. The whole appendix is of the highest biographical interest, showing how Wordsworth's permanent principles and aspirations worked out, when they were applied to the practical issues of his own times.

On one other occasion only, had Wordsworth expressed himself upon home-politics in prose. In 1829, the year of the Catholic Relief Bill, he wrote a letter, addressed—though probably never sent—to the Bishop (Blomfield) of London, which for its terse periods and unqualified opinions is remarkable among his writings. It is easy to indicate, constructively, Wordsworth's attitude upon this subject. We know that, though by no means a strict sabbatarian or church-goer, the poet looked to the Church as a moral engine of supreme force, in the training of the national character. The Pastor's speeches in *The Excursion*, the cumulative evidence of the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, as well as the definitely religious trend of the mass of his later poems, show how deeply Wordsworth was convinced that English Protestantism was the source of England's strength. This first: and next, the old man's growing unwillingness to admit into the problem, which he had set himself to solve, new and disturbing factors; his distrust of the easy humanity which cries, give way, give way, and neglects the ultimate goal. There was high-mindedness at least in the appeal: "It is, we trust, the intention of Providence that the Church of Rome should in due time disappear; and come what may on the Church of England, we have the satisfaction of knowing that, in defending a Government resting on a Protestant basis, we are working for the welfare of humankind, and supporting whatever there is of dignity in our frail nature." For to us, living at a time when these questions are ancient history, the perspective of the years changes the features of the struggle. The prominent figures are no longer the Ayes and Noes, as such; a personal interest supervenes, and there stand out, above the politics and polemics, above the cause and the winning or losing it, the earnestness

that was called forth, the depths that were moved, the heights that trembled on their cloudy summits. "Three great conflicts," wrote Wordsworth in this letter, surveying the battlefield, "three great conflicts are before the progressive nations, between Christianity and Infidelity, between Papacy and Protestantism, and between the spirit of the old feudal and monarchical governments and the representative and republican system, as established in America." We know how he had laboured to prevent a recurrence of the materialism of the eighteenth century, a repetition of the terror of the French Revolution. The same devotion armed him now. He saw in the removal of the civil disabilities of the Roman Catholics, the importation of Papacy from Ireland, and "does not history prove," he asks, "that however other sects may have languished under the relaxing influence of good fortune, Papacy has ever been most fiery and rampant, when most prosperous?" Nay, more: considering the origin of the Irish vote, "called into birth by short-sighted landlords, and by priests who, for lucre's sake, favour the increase of marriages," its political power, Wordsworth contends, should be in inverse ratio to its numbers. And finally, "while it is obvious that the political agitators could not rouse the people without the intervention of the priests, it is true that the priests could not excite the people without a hope, that from an exaltation of their Church, their social condition would be improved. What in Irish interpretation these words would mean, we may tremble to think of." —I am very far from defending the argument; the cause is settled beyond defence or attack; and with its settlement, and the settlement of similar causes of more recent date, the need for political partisanship is past. We can admire the more the singleness of purpose which, even

with the narrowing vision of old age, painfully sought the light.

The Philippics of a poet are seldom of practical worth. The quality of eloquence may be his,—it belonged to Wordsworth in a marked degree,—but the Demosthenic quality of contagion, and the actuality of present service, will rarely be found in such works. And naturally so. For the genius of the poet is *ex hypothesi*, an idealising force. His it is to interpret the past, or to prophesy for the future, to sound hope in depression and tenderness in victory; but the more intently he fixes his gaze on the "far-off divine event," the less likely he is to read with clearness the signs of the passing hour. He deals with motives, not with facts, since the race advances by conduct; law and state-craft deal with facts, since nations compete in activity. This gulf the political writings of Wordsworth did not and could not bridge: the poetic bias intervened, and the chief interest they ever possessed is as eloquence and biography.

Literary and Critical.

We pass into a different atmosphere when we come to his literary essays. Although in the eyes of his contemporary reviewers, there seemed something ponderous and encyclopædic in Wordsworth's habit of appending elaborate explanations in prose to his experiments in verse; although, as we have seen reason to believe,* the mere formulation of his principles involved him in theories less elastic than his practice; and although our better understanding of the reactionary impulse that moved the poet † enables us to make certain abatements from his absolute views; yet, all deductions and qualifications admitted, Wordsworth's

* See Chapter II., pp. 55-6, *supra*.
† See Chapter III., pp. 89-91, *supra*.

essays on his own art are valuable and instructive reading. In a little volume recently published at the Aldine House (Messrs Dent & Co.) under the title of *The Prelude to Poetry*, a preface and an appendix by Wordsworth are justly included with Sir Philip Sidney's "Apologie for Poetry" and other selections from the poets on themselves. This is perhaps the first occasion that due honour has been paid to these writings. The tradition of homeliness has blocked the way: but they need only to be more widely read in order to win more general admiration.

The Poetics of Wordsworth consist (1) of the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, finally arranged and treated as an independent essay in the edition of 1802; (2) of an Appendix, in the form of a note to this Preface, on the words 'poetic diction'; (3) of the Preface to the *Poems* in two volumes of 1815—the first edition in which the classification by moods was adopted; (4) of an Essay, supplementary to the Preface, and published at the same time; and (5) of the Preface to the Excursion (1815), in which the famous simile is employed of the Gothic church with its ante-chapel and oratories, to which reference has already been made. It was to the consideration of (1) and (2) that Coleridge particularly applied himself in the latter part of his *Biographia Literaria*. Grosart, in his second volume of Wordworth's Prose Works has given these essays not inappropriate titles; (3), for instance, appears there as "of Poetry as Observation and Description"; and (4) as "Poetry as a Study." For purposes of clearness, it will be better to refer to them under the form and date of their original publication.

The Preface (1802) sounded at once the note of reaction: "A multitude of causes," Wordsworth was constrained to write, "unknown to former times, are now

acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind. . . . The most effective of these causes are the great national events which are daily taking place, and the increasing accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident, which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies. To this tendency of life and manners the literature and theatrical exhibitions of the country have conformed themselves. The invaluable works of our elder writers, I had almost said the works of Shakespeare and Milton, are driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse." So far, and with the substitution of Norway for Germany, this diagnosis of a century ago would suit our own day; nor has there been wanting the charge of intellectual apathy which Wordsworth then preferred. The difference is, that the physician of that date prescribed and dispensed a remedy, which has given ease and relief to thousands, besides having renewed for his successors a sounder principle in the theory of poetical composition. "When I think," Wordsworth continued, "upon this degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation, I am almost ashamed to have spoken of the feeble endeavour made in these volumes to counteract it; and, reflecting upon the magnitude of the general evil, I should be oppressed with no dishonourable melancholy, had I not a deep impression of certain inherent and indestructible qualities of the human mind, and likewise of certain powers in the great and permanent objects that act upon it, which are equally inherent and indestructible." With the latter part of this sentence should be compared the "remand to nature" which we found Wordsworth recommending,

as the solution of Mathetes' problem (p. 161). Amid the fleeting impressions of the senses, and in the deterioration of the mental faculties they produce, nature's abiding processes and the natural laws inferred have a salutary influence, at once as method and as knowledge.

Meanwhile, as to the form which the "feeble endeavour" assumed. In what respects did the principles enunciated in the Preface of 1798 (1802) involve a break with poetical tradition? Wordsworth claims as innovations, first, "that each of these poems has a worthy *purpose*"; secondly, "that the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation, and not the action and situation to the feeling"; thirdly, "that there will be found in these volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction," and to this last topic, as already stated, the Appendix of the same date is devoted. It follows, from this threefold aspect of reform, that the first reformer went to humble and to rustic life for the exhibition of his art; for the *purpose* aimed at, which is, by applying the habit of discrimination to incidents and situations, to trace in them, "truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature," is best attained in those walks of life where the passions to be contemplated work with greater simplicity and are less under restraint, while they speak in plainer and more emphatic language. To the present generation, which has walked with Burns by the furrow, or has followed Enoch Arden's funeral down the winding village by the sea, it is difficult to realise how grave and imperative a charge it seemed that Wordsworth laid upon himself. We are rather overdone than otherwise with this talk of passion and sentiment, discoverable in the homes of the poor. Yet consider for a moment the poetry of Scott, or Byron, or Shelley, or Keats, nay, of Coleridge himself, all

of whom were Wordsworth's contemporaries, and the democratic idea which Wordsworth formulated at the beginning of the century, and which Tennyson continued after his death, will be revealed in its daring novelty. Or consider, on the other hand, the preciosities of diction by which the Popian school had protected poetry for the few, and Wordsworth's revolt from its elaborate fetters has an equal claim on our gratitude. Life, in the eighteenth century, had been lived on the surface of passing sensations: it was Wordsworth's endeavour to recall it to simplicity, to its elements. "For the human mind," I am still quoting from the preface (1802), "is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants; and he must have a very faint perception of its beauty and dignity who does not know this, and who does not further know, that one being is elevated above another, in proportion as he possesses this capability." It is the same perception which derives a higher pleasure from the natural lines and curves of landscape than from the trim parterres, geometrically disposed, of a former fashion. But the double danger to be guarded against, in considering Wordsworth's reforms, is of depreciating their intention while exaggerating their extent. The innovation was radical: the poetry was genuine. "Nor let this necessity of producing immediate pleasure be considered as a degradation of the Poet's art. It is far otherwise. It is an acknowledgment of the beauty of the universe, an acknowledgment the more sincere, because not formal, but indirect; it is a task light and easy to him who looks at the world in the spirit of love; further, it is an homage paid to the native and naked dignity of man, to the grand elementary principle of pleasure, by which he knows, and feels, and lives, and moves."

To this condition of pleasure Wordsworth had so far deferred, that he chose metrical composition, rather than prose, for the vehicle of his thought. For, not Prose and Poetry, but Prose and Metre, Poetry and Matter of Fact, are Wordsworth's critical antitheses, whence it follows that the language of prose, with metre superadded, suffices for poetical *style*; the vogue of conventions and conceits had been designed to disguise Matter of Fact in the dress of Imagination. The short appendix (1802) amplifies this view. "The earliest poets of all nations," it remarks, "generally wrote from passion excited by real events; they wrote naturally, and as men: feeling powerfully as they did, their language was daring, and figurative. In succeeding times, poets, and men ambitious of the fame of poets, perceiving the influence of such language, and desirous of producing the same effect without being animated by the same passion, set themselves to a mechanical adoption of these figures of speech, and made use of them, sometimes with propriety, but much more frequently applied them to feelings and thoughts with which they had no natural connection whatsoever. A language was thus insensibly produced, differing materially from the real language of men in *any situation*." From this, two evils resulted: in the first place, the reading public, predisposed to suspend their ordinary judgment in the porches of the muse, were unable to distinguish the true from the false; "the one served as a passport for the other;" and, in the second place, the abuse of language was carried still further, and poetic diction receded yet another step from reality. "In process of time," according to the stately indictment of this Appendix, "metre became a symbol or promise of this unusual language, and whoever took upon him to write in metre, according as he possessed more or less

of true poetic genius, introduced less or more of this adulterated phraseology into his compositions, and the true and the false were inseparably interwoven until, the taste of men becoming gradually perverted, this language was received as a natural language: and at length, by the influence of books upon men, did to a certain degree really become so. Abuses of this kind were imported from one nation to another, and with the progress of refinement this diction became daily more and more corrupt, thrusting out of sight the plain humanities of nature by a motley masquerade of tricks, quaintnesses, hieroglyphics, and enigmas." The convention of composition was protected by a convention of admiration. It flattered men's vanity and laid their judgment asleep, to think themselves admitted into *arcana* of style. Persius in Rome, the Euphuists in England, and—may we not add?—George Meredith to-day have known how to utilise these weaknesses. Wordsworth's own examples are more dignified and no less emphatic. He contrasts with the original of Proverbs vi, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard," Dr Johnson's paraphrase, where the whole armoury of poetic diction was ransacked, ostensibly in the cause of poetry, until

> "How long shall sloth usurp thy useless hours,
> Unnerve thy vigour, and enchain thy powers?
> While artful chains thy downy couch enclose,
> And soft solicitation courts repose,
> Amidst the drowsy charms of dull delight,
> Year chases year with unremitted flight,
> Till want now following, fraudulent and slow,
> Shall spring to seize thee, like an ambush'd foe,"

took the place of the preacher's words: "How long wilt thou sleep, O Sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall thy poverty come as one

that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man." The sacrifice was ready, and the victim bound: shall we quarrel with Wordsworth's conclusion, "that in works of *imagination and sentiment*, in proportion as ideas and feelings are valuable, whether the composition be in prose or verse, they require and exact one and the same language. Metre is but adventitious to composition, and the phraseology for which that passport is necessary, even where it may be graceful at all, will be little valued by the judicious." (Appendix *fin.*)

The Preface of 1815 is of less general interest, in that the principles which it enunciated had little further design "than to throw some light upon the present Volumes." So far, it has already been considered in the third chapter of this book. Wordsworth distinguishes the powers requisite for the production of poetry under six heads,—Observation and Description, Sensibility, Reflection, Imagination and Fancy, Invention, Judgment, the last, like Aristotle's φρόνησις, controlling and regulating the rest. This comprises the subjective equipment of the poet: working upon the raw material of life, the moulds and forms which are produced are also sixfold,—Narrative, Dramatic, Lyrical, Idyllic, Didactic, and philosophical Satire; "out of the last three has been constructed a composite order of which Young's 'Night Thoughts' and Cowper's 'Task,' are excellent examples." "It is deducible from the above," the Preface continues, "that poems, apparently miscellaneous, may with propriety be arranged either with reference to the powers of mind *predominant* in the production of them, or to the mould in which they are cast, or, lastly, to the subjects to which they relate." Mere chronological order of composition—the arrangement chosen in the Eversley edition of Wordsworth, and generally for purposes

of convenience—appeared to the poet an unjustified assertion of egotism. The remainder of this Preface is concerned with Wordsworth's arrangement of his own minor poems, according to the mood predominating in the composition of each, but not without reference, both within the groups and in the sequence of the groups, to their joint aspect as a legitimate whole, typifying the procession of the seasons of life. Meanwhile, in connection with Wordsworth's sense of the virtual contract implied by the choice of metrical composition, in antithesis to prose, the following sentence is significant: "Poems, however humble of their kind, if they be good in their kind, cannot read themselves; the law of long syllable and short must not be so inflexible,—the letter of metre must not be so impassive to the spirit of versification,—as to deprive the Reader of all voluntary power to modulate, in subordination to the sense, the music of the poems—in the same manner as his mind is left at liberty, and even summoned, to act upon its thoughts and images." This is Wordsworth's answer to such critics as have exercised themselves in pointing out, that his metre sometimes unconsciously serves to heighten the poetic effect.* There is no inconsistency herein; for, as this Preface remarks, "though the accompaniment of a musical instrument be frequently dispensed with, the true (lyric) Poet does not therefore abandon his privilege distinct from that of the mere Proseman:

> He murmurs near the running brooks
> A music sweeter than their own."

I add, without comment, a passage from the same source, which, whatever its exegetical value, it was not in human

* See, for instance, F. W. H. Myers' *Wordsworth* in *English Men of Letters*, pp. 107-8. Compare Chapter II., p. 56, note*.

reviewers' nature to read at the time without a smile; it was so much easier to fasten on its naive solemnity than to discern the beauties which it teased.

> "'Over his own sweet voice the Stock-dove *broods*.'
>
> "The stock-dove is said to *coo*, a sound well imitating the note of the bird; but, by the intervention of the metaphor *broods*, the affections are called in by the imagination to assist in marking the manner in which the bird reiterates and prolongs her * soft note, as if herself delighting to listen to it, and participating of a quiet and still satisfaction, like that which may be supposed inseparable from the continuous process of incubation. 'His voice was *buried* among the trees,' a metaphor expressing the love of *seclusion* by which this bird is marked; and characterising its note as not partaking of the shrill and piercing, and therefore more easily deadened by the intervening shade; yet a note so peculiar and withal so pleasing, that the breeze, gifted with that love of the sound which the Poet feels, penetrates the shades in which it is entombed, and conveys it to the ear of the listener.†
>
> "Shall I call thee Bird,
> Or but a wandering Voice?
>
> "This concise interrogation characterises the seeming ubiquity of the voice of the cuckoo, and dispossesses the creature almost of a corporeal existence; the Imagination being tempted to this exertion of her power of a consciousness in the memory that the cuckoo is almost perpetually heard throughout the season of spring, but seldom becomes an object of sight."

The Essay (1815), supplementary to this Preface, attempts to analyse the faculty of taste in poetry. Wordsworth's chief contribution to the problem is contained in his assertion, that a true poet has to train his audience. "We are all poets when we read a poem well," Carlyle once wrote; and Wordsworth claims, in a similar sense, that the making and the reading of poetry is a kind of co-operative concern,—the poet has to call forth latent powers

* It is a curious variation of the personal pronoun.

† The following line runs "Yet to be come at by the breeze."

of appreciation in his readers. Two corollaries follow: first, that success is the ultimate test of genius; secondly, that the best poetry does not instantly achieve popularity. Wordsworth did not shrink from either inference. "Of genius, in the fine arts," this Essay remarks, "the only infallible sign is the widening the sphere of human sensibility, for the delight, honour, and benefit of human nature. Genius is the introduction of a new element into the intellectual universe: or, if that be not allowed, it is the application of powers to objects on which they had not before been exercised, or the employment of them in such a manner as to produce effects hitherto unknown. What is all this but an advance, or a conquest, made by the soul of the poet?" Failing the advance, there is no genius. On the other hand, the greater the originality, the less immediate the advance. "Away, then, with the senseless iteration of the word *popular*, applied to new works in poetry, as if there were no test of excellence in this first of the fine arts but that all men should run after its productions, as if urged by an appetite, or constrained by a spell!" Popular writing appeals to the taste of the moment, and passes with it: genius, brooding over the present, on the wings of the future and the past, is independent of the fashion of a day. At any given time, there will be found both good poetry and bad: the difference is, that of the good, "the *individual*, as well as the species, survives from age to age; whereas, of the depraved, though the species be immortal, the individual quickly *perishes*." Wordsworth rapidly examines the history of English literature, to illustrate this contention, and concludes his review with a summary criticism of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*. His "Eminent Poets" were those who had been content to follow, instead of creating taste.

One point more. The argument does not hang together without a distinction being drawn between the Public and the People; * and if we consider how human nature remains immutably the same, through all changes of social manners and opinion, we cannot but confirm this verdict. "Is it the result of the whole," Wordsworth asks, "that the judgment of the People is not to be respected? The thought is most injurious; . . . the People have already been justified, and their eulogium pronounced by implication, when it was said above—that, of *good* poetry, the *individual*, as well as the species, *survives*. And how does it survive but through the People? What preserves it but their intellect and their wisdom? . . . The voice that issues from this spirit, is that Vox Populi which the Deity inspires. Foolish must he be who can mistake for this a local acclamation, or a transitory outcry—transitory though it be for years, local though from a nation. Still more lamentable is his error who can believe that there is anything of divine infallibility in the clamour of that small though loud portion of the community, ever governed by factitious influence, which, under the name of the Public, passes itself, upon the unthinking, for the People." The personal application is obvious. Equally obvious is the confusion of Wordsworth's contemporary public, and the growing consent of the people.

The course of this essay, the last notable fragment of Wordsworth's theory of Poetics, had involved the writer in various criticisms, of more or less severity, on ancient and recent authors. Without following these in detail, I would call attention to the remarks on Thomson, for whom, and

* Cp. Wordsworth's Letter to Sir George Beaumont on *Peter Bell*. Chapter II., p. 80, *supra*. Cp., too, in the present chapter (p. 156), the maxim quoted, "When the people speaks loudly—"

for the "Castle of Indolence" in especial, Wordsworth evinced a hearty admiration, albeit qualified by a discriminating sense of his defects, refracted from the public taste of his day. Still more unconditional is the debt which Wordsworth acknowledges to the Percy "Reliques"; and, in this context, it is interesting to note his familiarity with German literature. He is able to criticise, with a fine feeling for the language, Bürger's adaptation of Percy. But by far the most interesting of the poet's excursions into prose criticism of poets had been *A Letter to a Friend* [Mr Gray, Master of the High School, Edinburgh] *of Robert Burns: occasioned by an intended Republication of an Account of the Life of Burns, by Dr Currie.* The *Letter* (London, Longman) is dated January 1816, and gave rise to considerable comment. *Blackwood's Magazine*, as befitted a Scottish paper, opened its columns to a discussion; and in its June, October, and November numbers, 1817, the *Letter* was alternately attacked and defended. In the following year, Hazlitt, in delivering one of his Lectures on English Poetry at the Surrey Institution, referred to the *Letter* with contempt, on the score of its tone of assumption: though, remembering Wordsworth's poems to Burns, and his mention of him in the essay (1815),—"Scotland; —a country that has produced a Dunbar, a Buchanan, a Thomson, and a Burns,"—the allegation seems unlikely.*

The value of the *Letter* is twofold, and I am unable to discover therein the superiority which Hazlitt imputed. It pays a just and generous tribute to the "man of extraordinary genius" who was its subject; and rising from the particular theme, it proceeds to deal with the art of bio-

* The Lecture is included in W. Hazlitt's Works: *Lectures on English Poets; Burns and the Old Ballads*, pp. 250-58. Templeman, London.

graphy in general, uttering an eloquent and indignant plea for the fine philosophy which can strike a balance between "the claims of the deceased on the one hand, and of the present age and future generations, on the other." "Such philosophy," Wordsworth remarks, constrained by Dr Currie's indiscretions, "runs a risk of becoming extinct among us, if the coarse intrusions into the recesses, the gross breaches upon the sanctities of domestic life, to which we have lately been more and more accustomed, are to be regarded as indications of a vigorous state of public feeling. Intelligent lovers of freedom are from necessity bold and hardy lovers of truth; but, according to the measure in which their love is intelligent, it is attended with a finer discrimination, and a more sensitive delicacy. The wise and good (and all others, being lovers of licence rather than of liberty, are in fact slaves) respect, as one of the noblest characteristics of Englishmen, that jealousy of familiar approach, which, while it contributes to the maintenance of private dignity, is one of the most efficacious guardians of rational public freedom." For Wordsworth had seen with his own eyes how irrational public freedom became, when all privacy of intercourse was swamped in the common title of 'Citoyen.' Most especially must the biographer of poets descend from his judgment-seat,—"if their works be good, they contain within themselves all that is necessary to their being comprehended and relished." If Burns had resisted all the offences that his detractors fling at his fame, "he would have been a poet of a different class," and there the matter ends. For "on the basis of his human character he has reared a poetic one, which with more or less distinctness presents itself to view in almost every part of his earlier, and, in my estimation, his most valuable verses. This

poetic fabric, dug out of the quarry of genuine humanity, is airy and spiritual, and though the materials, in some parts, are coarse, and the disposition is often fantastic and irregular, yet the whole is agreeable and strikingly attractive. Plague, then, upon your remorseless hunters after matter of fact (who, after all, rank among the blindest of human beings) when they would convince you that the foundations of this admirable edifice are hollow; and that its frame is unsound! Granting that all which has been raked up to the prejudice of Burns were literally true; and that it added, which it does not, to our better understanding of human nature and human life, . . . how poor would have been the compensation for the deduction made, by this extrinsic knowledge, from the intrinsic efficacy of his poetry,—to please, and to instruct!"

In the long and curious history of literary criticism, there are few passages more pleasing than this on Burns, written within twenty years of his death by a greater poet than himself, the steady lights of whose life could not look without sorrow on the brilliant waywardness of the Scottish bard. It was a triumph of sympathy which drove Wordsworth to write of the ill-judged epitaph of Burns' biographers,—"This is indeed to be 'crushed beneath the furrow's weight!'"

Six years earlier, Wordsworth had sent to "*The Friend*" of February 22, 1810, an essay *Upon Epitaphs* in general, and two additional essays on the same subject, similarly destined but never published, are printed from the author's MS. We had occasion to notice, in our account of Wordsworth's wedding-journey, his fondness for country-churchyards; and the foible gains interest from the course of enquiry pursued in the first of these papers. In the philosophy of epitaphs, which is there drawn up, the habit

of raising memorials and monuments to the dead is characteristically referred to man's instinctive belief in immortality. "The dog or horse perishes in the field, or in the stall, by the side of his companions, and is incapable of anticipating the sorrow with which his surrounding associates shall bemoan his death, or pine for his loss; he cannot pre-conceive this regret, he can form no thought of it; and therefore cannot possibly have a desire to leave such regret or remembrance behind him. Add to the principle of love, which exists in the inferior animals, the faculty of reason which exists in man alone! will the conjunction of these account for the desire? Doubtless it is a necessary consequence of this conjunction; yet not I think as a direct result, but only to be come at by an intermediate thought, viz. that of an intimation or assurance within us, that some part of our nature is imperishable." The essay next proceeds to elaborate the due requisites of an epitaph, a discussion which is lighted up by some of those flashes of observation, whose cheerful note is so essentially Wordsworthian: "The objects of admiration in human character are not scanty, but abundant: and every man has a character of his own, to the eye that has skill to perceive it." Or again, "The light of love in our hearts is a satisfactory evidence that there is a body of worth in the minds of our friends or kindred, whence that light has proceeded."

The second and third papers in this little series examine some existing epitaphs. The former is prefaced by a few remarks on the query suggested by the uniform eulogy of tombstones,—"Where are all the *bad* people buried?" The object of these remarks is to point out, that, rustic vice being a much noisier and more obvious affair in life than the retiring virtues of the countryside, it is mere

compensation that death should reverse the record. Of the inscriptions quoted and the reflections inferred from them, interesting though the essay is, I select a single example, if only for the sake of the very happy simile which the commentary upon it introduces:—

"The following epitaph is to be found in a church-yard in Westmoreland; . . . the date is 1673.

> "Under this stone, Reader, inter'd doth lie
> Beauty and Virtue's true epitomy.
> At her appearance the noonë-son
> Blush'd and shrunk in cause quite outdon.
> In her concentered did all graces dwell:
> God pluck'd my rose that He might take a smell.
> I'll say no more: but weeping wish I may
> Soone with thy dear chaste ashes com to lay.
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While fully admitting the extravagance of these lines, and characterising the sixth as little less than impious, Wordsworth rates its inspiration more highly than the best in Pope's collection. "These fantastic images," he says, "though they stained the writing, stained not her soul,—they did not even touch it; but hung like globules of rain suspended over a green leaf, along which they may roll and leave no trace that they have passed over it." The analogy is perfect. "This simple-hearted man," Wordsworth continues, and the apology connects itself with the author's theory of poetics, "must have been betrayed by a common notion that what was natural in prose would be out of place in verse;—that it is not the Muse which puts on the garb but the garb which makes the Muse. . . . He thought that the further he wandered from Nature in his language the more would he honour his departed consort. . . . The quality of his fault and its very excess are both in favour of this conclusion."

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have the whole contents of the nurseryman's catalogue jumbled together—colour at war with colour, and form with form,"—the poet is justly bitter. No less earnestly does he protest against the wholesale deformity of "the small patches and large tracts of larch-plantations that are overrunning the hill-sides." I cannot but quote the terms of this indictment at length:

> "In spring the larch becomes green long before the native trees; and its green is so peculiar and vivid, that finding nothing to harmonise with it, whenever it comes forth, a disagreeable speck is produced. In summer, when all other trees are in their pride, it is of a dingy, lifeless hue; in autumn, of a spiritless unvaried yellow, and in winter it is still more lamentably distinguished from every other deciduous tree of the forest, for they seem only to sleep, but the larch appears absolutely dead. If an attempt be made to mingle thickets, or a certain proportion of other forest-trees, with the larch, its horizontal branches intolerantly cut them down as with a scythe, or force them to spindle up to keep pace to it. The terminating spike renders it impossible that the several trees, where planted in numbers, should ever blend together so as to form a mass or masses of wood. Add thousands to tens of thousands, and the appearance is still the same—a collection of separate individual trees, obstinately presenting themselves as such; and which, from whatever point they are looked at, if but seen, may be counted upon the fingers. Sunshine or shadow has little power to adorn the surface of such a wood; and the trees not carrying up their heads, the wind raises among them no majestic undulations. It is indeed true, that in countries where the larch is a native, and where, without interruption, it may sweep from valley to valley, and from hill to hill, a sublime image may be produced. . . . For sublimity will never be wanting, where the sense of innumerable multitude is lost in, and alternates with, that of intense unity; and to the ready perception of this effect, similarity and almost identity of individual form, and monotony of colour contribute. But this feeling is confined to the native immeasurate forest: no artificial plantation can give it."

On the constructive side, beginning his operations

almost at the doors of the house, Wordsworth would admit a few exotics. Next them should come shrubs, "of the kinds scattered by Nature through the woods—holly, broom, wild-rose, elder, dogberry, white and black thorn, etc." Then orchard-trees and wood-fruits, selected with an eye to the colours of their blossom, should effect the transition, from the shrubs to the forest-trees, of which the birch is noticed as the most beautiful native. "The Scotch fir," Wordsworth continues, "is less attractive during its youth, than any other plant; but, when full grown, if it has had room to spread out its arms, it becomes a noble tree; and, by those who are disinterested enough to plant for posterity, it may be placed along with the sycamore near the house; for, from their massiveness, both these trees unite well with buildings, and in same situations with rocks also; having, in their forms and apparent substances, the effect of something intermediate betwixt the immoveableness and solidity of stone, and the spray and foliage of the lighter trees."—Whether to call such passages Ruskinian, or to praise some essays of Ruskin, as conceived in the spirit of Wordsworth, is a point of merit perhaps hard to appraise: rather let us be grateful that such a conjunction of poet and landscape-gardener has twice appeared in our prosaic age, and may have saved the era of villa-dom from worse follies than it has committed.

I can only refer, in section first of this *Guide*, to the description of winter in the mountains of the Lake District, a piece of word-painting, admirable as observation, and eloquent as prose; to the passage on "skiey influences" and the effects of the clouds; as well as to the occurrence of such pregnant remarks as the following: "Sublimity is the result of nature's first great dealings with

the superficies of the Earth; but the general tendency of her subsequent operations is towards the production of beauty."

The Kendal Railway.

There remain for mention two *Letters*, originally published in the 'Morning Post' in 1844, on the projected Kendal and Windermere Railway. To the same theme Wordsworth had already devoted a Sonnet, dated from Rydal Mount, October 12th, of that year, and included in the third series of his *Miscellaneous Sonnets*. The attitude of the old man towards this subject may readily be conjectured. Every instinct of sentiment, every association of use, every perception of beauty, was set strongly against the change. My district, he pleaded, "has little to send out, and little has it also to receive;" and from this appeal to tenderness at the opening of the first *Letter* to the studied contempt at the close of the second, "we have too much hurrying about in these islands," the changes are rung on every and any argument, that could stay the inroad of the iron that would enter the poet's soul.—It was, at the worst, no indecorous valediction on his part, who had spent his time and thought in the fore-front of the endeavour to make beautiful the House of Life.

CHAPTER VI

A CRITICAL ESSAY

"ON the basis of his human life he reared a poetic one," we found Wordsworth writing in defence and in praise of Burns. The remark may be transferred to the writer himself: in a sense, there is no human life without the poetic one, no life worth living without the creative impulse of ideals.

The ideal which Wordsworth consciously set before his attainment is accordingly to be sought in the bulky structure of his poems. We have approached that structure from various points of view. There was its mere size, for instance, in which the stupendous output of the poet is itself a claim to majesty. There was the philosophical, again, in which we could trace in it the lines of reaction from eighteenth century thought. There was the linguistic, in which the notable feature was the deliberate rejection of ornament. More to the purpose, there was the point of view of history, in which the democratic idea, emerging from the French Revolution, was seen in its formative and determining force. We saw it as it affected Wordsworth's choice of subject, sending him to the field and to the hedgerow for the experimental examples of his teaching. We saw it as it moulded his language, remanding him to the vernacular of daily use. We saw it in its recoil from idle demagogy to a strenuous search for industrial peace built up on a natural convention of conduct. We saw its

optimistic tendency, its moral law of beauty in the common-place.

More than this. If a nation's poetry is in any sense the reflection of national life, then the greatest poets of the age should exhibit an inner unity of purpose. The greatest poets of the nineteenth century in England are William Wordsworth and Alfred Tennyson. Their names alone in this context are to be enrolled with Chaucer, or Shakespeare, or Milton, as the spokesmen of an epoch. In the light of the history of the present century, every objective differentiation, dividing us into Wordsworthians or Tennysonians, should be postponed to the consideration of their common "criticism of life." For the likeness of purpose discoverable in their work, however differently they approached it, however differently they elaborated it, is something more than accidental. It is their credential as masters and teachers; it is the final end of their age.

Let us try to establish this likeness. It is in Wordsworth's interest that the attempt should be made, because English thought has tended to neglect the vitality of the great laureate's work. In the persistency of Wordsworth's purpose lies the value of his threefold innovation. Take single passages from either, and the parallel will become clear. There is Wordsworth's aspiration in *Excursion*, ix. 672.

> The law of faith
> Working through love, such conquest shall it gain,
> Such triumph over sin and guilt achieve?

and there is Tennyson's warning to the knowledge of this world, in *In Memoriam*, cxiv.,

> What is she, cut from love and faith,
> But some wild Pallas from the brain
> Of Demons? . . . Let her know her place;
> She is the second, not the first.

There is Wordsworth's sonnet, beginning—

> The world is too much with us; late and soon,
> Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;

and there is Tennyson's similar sentiment in *Locksley Hall*,

> Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and I linger on the shore,
> And the individual withers, and the world is more and more.

There is Wordsworth's scheme of equality, in *Excursion*, ix. 235,

> Strange, should He deal herein with nice respects,
> And frustrate all the rest! Believe it not:
> The primal duties shine aloft,—like stars;
> The charities that soothe, and heal, and bless,
> Are scattered at the feet of man,—like flowers.
> . . . He, whose soul,
> Ponders this true equality, may walk
> The fields of earth with gratitude and hope;

there was his conclusion to *The Prelude*, "What one is, why may not millions be?" and there is Tennyson's prayer on Arthur Hallam's death, in *In Memoriam*, cxiv., again,

> I would the great world grew like thee,
> Why grewest not alone in power
> And knowledge, but by year and hour
> In reverence and in charity.

Is such a comparison hypercritical? I think not. I think that, if every other record of our times were to perish, except the poems of Wordsworth and Tennyson, history would still be able to draw conclusions as to our intellectual and moral development by no means remote from truth. Examples in this regard might readily be multiplied.* There is the whole duty of the industrial

* See, for instance, Chapter I., pp. 20-1, *supra*.

of raising memorials and monuments to the dead is characteristically referred to man's instinctive belief in immortality. "The dog or horse perishes in the field, or in the stall, by the side of his companions, and is incapable of anticipating the sorrow with which his surrounding associates shall bemoan his death, or pine for his loss; he cannot pre-conceive this regret, he can form no thought of it; and therefore cannot possibly have a desire to leave such regret or remembrance behind him. Add to the principle of love, which exists in the inferior animals, the faculty of reason which exists in man alone! will the conjunction of these account for the desire? Doubtless it is a necessary consequence of this conjunction; yet not I think as a direct result, but only to be come at by an intermediate thought, viz. that of an intimation or assurance within us, that some part of our nature is imperishable." The essay next proceeds to elaborate the due requisites of an epitaph, a discussion which is lighted up by some of those flashes of observation, whose cheerful note is so essentially Wordsworthian: "The objects of admiration in human character are not scanty, but abundant: and every man has a character of his own, to the eye that has skill to perceive it." Or again, "The light of love in our hearts is a satisfactory evidence that there is a body of worth in the minds of our friends or kindred, whence that light has proceeded."

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> "Sic efflevit Maritus."

While fully admitting the extravagance of these lines, and characterising the sixth as little less than impious, Wordsworth rates its inspiration more highly than the best in Pope's collection. "These fantastic images," he says, "though they stained the writing, stained not her soul,—they did not even touch it; but hung like globules of rain suspended over a green leaf, along which they may roll and leave no trace that they have passed over it." The analogy is perfect. "This simple-hearted man," Wordsworth continues, and the apology connects itself with the author's theory of poetics, "must have been betrayed by a common notion that what was natural in prose would be out of place in verse;—that it is not the Muse which puts on the garb but the garb which makes the Muse. . . . He thought that the further he wandered from Nature in his language the more would he honour his departed consort. . . . The quality of his fault and its very excess are both in favour of this conclusion."

design. In the duty is the music; in the function is the joy.

The joy,—for this is the *Quo, Musa, tendis?* of Wordsworth's search for truth. Not the riot of iconoclastic intellect; not the excitement of sensuous gratification alone, but the ordered joy of responsible freedom, which is at once unconscious and spontaneous, and to be acquired through experience by faith. It lies within the gift of duty. Not only, in her *Ode*, does Duty appear as "Stern Daughter of the Voice of God;" not only is hers the restraining hand which keeps the stars in their courses, and chastens the errors of men, but hers is also the custody and the largess of joy,—"Flowers *laugh* before thee on their beds, and fragrance in thy footing treads!"

I have said that this joy in a secondary degree, unlike the "unbodied joy" of Shelley's *Skylark*, may be acquired through experience by faith. In this aspect, I would again suggest to you a comparison between the earlier and the later Laureate, because the comparison will serve to bring out the limitation—and the strength—of Wordsworth's power. It failed, we shall find, on the side of rebellion. The transports which that note can summon in the mouth of a Heine or a Byron were excluded from Wordsworth's range. Take, then, Tennyson's exquisite song, *Break, break, break*, and compare it, from this point of view, with Wordsworth's famous *Ode, On the Intimations of Immortality*. We find in the former a lament,—it arises from a personal bereavement,—for very force of which the sea breaks unheeding, and "the stately ships go on" with a strange alien security:

> But the tender grace of a day that is dead
> Will never come back to me.

Now, Wordsworth's *Ode* opens with precisely the same lament, and to Wordsworth, as to Tennyson, the stately procession of phenomena serves but to emphasize his loss :

> The Rainbow comes and goes,
> And lovely is the Rose,
> The Moon doth with delight
> Look round her when the heavens are bare,
> Waters on a starry night
> Are beautiful and fair ;
> The sunshine is a glorious birth ;
> But yet I know,
> Where'er I go,
> That there hath passed away a glory from the earth.

The parallel may be pressed more closely. In the second stanza of his *Song*, Tennyson contrasts with his own mood the untaught blitheness of common life :

> O well for the fisherman's boy
> That he shouts with his sister at play !
> O well for the sailor lad
> That he sings in his boat on the bay !

But he makes no effort in this place—the task was reserved till *In Memoriam*—to win that joy for himself,

> And I would that my tongue could utter
> The thoughts that arise in me.

To Wordsworth, on the contrary, though, characteristically enough, in more than the human spectacle, the same sense of contrast had occurred, yet in strophe iii. of the *Ode*,

> A timely utterance gave that thought relief :

Henceforward, he cries,

> The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep ;
> No more shall grief of mine the season wrong ;
> I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng ;
> The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep,

And all the earth is gay;
Land and sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every Beast keep holiday;—
Thou child of Joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy Shepherd-boy!

Joy has intervened. I am not concerned here to point out the process of reasoning, by which Wordsworth recovered and repaired his joy.* Still less am I concerned to show that Tennyson's supreme command of the keys of language was, after all, his greatest gift. But the collocation is important because, to a large class of readers, Wordsworth has always seemed a colder and less actual poet than was his successor, and this ready relief which he found is taken as the correlative of light emotions. It is true that the direct expression of personal grief, as such, occurs hardly more than once in his works; and even upon that occasion, in the *Elegiac Stanzas* (to his Brother), *Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm*, the grief has already been transmuted into fine resignation,—"Not without hope we suffer and we mourn." But this hope is the fruit of no easy victory. It cannot bring back the instinctive delight of the "sailor lad" or the "shepherd boy" in the poems just compared; or, rather, it brings it back with reason superadded to instinct, so that, in his perception of a common design, man can surrender himself to the call of duty, as willingly as the flowers on their beds. And this willing surrender is the visible sign-manual of the democratic creed, — Wordsworth's or Tennyson's indifferently:

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy

* See, however, Chapter II., pp. 51-4, *supra*.

Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All living things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. (*Tintern Abbey.*)

—One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves. (*In Mem., fin.*)

The key to the reproach is rather, that Wordsworth lived more consciously than Tennyson in the joy of this presence, in the divinity of this event. But such life, and its radiant expression, are of the deep, not the shallows of emotion; for perfect faith is equally passionate with revolt. Wordsworth's human horizon broadened beyond the individual. More consistently than any poet since Milton, he gazed from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven. He was continually ascending and descending, as though by a ladder, from the Many to the One, from the One to the Many. And in so far as the power of faith is the consolation of experience, Wordsworth is the most consolatory, the most joy-bringing of English poets. It is a high claim to make, but we have recognised its limitations on the emotional side. It is a high claim to make, but it is the only possible claim which is consonant with the dignity of Wordsworth's verse. Short of failure, there is no other alternative. For, as it is a greater test of private friendship to sympathise with joy than with sorrow, so it is on a higher plane of imagination that contentment is sounded instead of rebellion. It is a rarer mood, and a more exalted; but its sanction is more universally diffused. In the words that Wordsworth put into the mouth of Protesilaus,—

"Calm pleasures there abide, majestic pains. . . . The Gods approve the depth, and not the tumult of the soul."

Yes,—depth, and not tumult. This is exactly the metaphor required; for the joy which Wordsworth rendered is the endless peace beneath the surface of a troubled sea. Coleridge once said, His proper title is *Spectator ab extra*; and, in a sense, the true poet is always a philosopher, spectator of all time and being, looking on from without. His voice is *over*heard, in the meaning of J. S. Mill's distinction, — Eloquence is heard, Poetry is overheard. The joy in common things, the "joy in widest commonalty spread," the "joy of one" that should be "joy for tens of millions," is arrested in the opening of a flower, in the flight and song of birds, in the bounding of lambs in spring; it smiles on the face of infancy, and is set to the music of the spheres; and man that suffers and man that mourns may win his share, if he will but seek it in Wordsworth's constant mood,

> That blessed mood,
> In which the burthen of the mystery,
> In which the heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible world
> Is lightened :—. . .
> While, with an eye made quiet by the power
> Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
> We see into the life of things.

On the other hand, if the reproach of coldness and remoteness, which we have learnt to recognise as passionate faith, be meant to depreciate Wordsworth's artistic insight and sympathy, the answer is written in his works. To Michael, or Ruth, to Margaret in *The Excursion*, to Leonard Ewbank in *The Brothers*, Wordsworth brought a power of understanding, truer and more valuable as it was further removed from sensational effect. The tragedies

that lie nearest to the human heart are in their nature calm, for passion is static, not dynamic. In this respect, the collocation of Wordsworth and Tennyson is entirely in the interests of the latter. Tennyson's actual democratic poems, though their purpose is justified in Wordsworth's precedent, fail on the side of reality. There is more dramatic truth in the simple statement of passion in its elements, such, for instance, as is surpassingly rendered in the conclusion to *Michael*, than in all the dramatic machinery evoked to kill the May-Queen. And the contrast in method is the more instructive, because of the essential similarity of spirit, which I have purposely been at pains to point out. For if this spirit—admitting demos to the freedom of poetry—be set, as it assuredly is set, in the forward footsteps of the muse; if on these lines only the poetry of the future is to be written; if poetry, that is to be immortal, can never again go back from the present deliberate extension of its franchise; then to Wordsworth and Tennyson, chief of our post-Revolution poets, belongs the Titanic quality. They bore the burden of the world. That Wordsworth was the first, or that Wordsworth was the more consistent, neither abandoning the burden in old age, nor disguising it by an innate aristocracy of heart, makes him, perhaps, the greater teacher. But the merits of the two poets are finally incommensurable; for the energies that Wordsworth gave to truth, Tennyson gave to its expression. What is important, is this: Wordsworth, in a sense, was the poetic Socrates of the democratic idea, and Tennyson, its Plato; at least, Wordsworth was the founder of a new school in English poetry, which counts in Tennyson its chief disciple. Historically speaking, they cannot be read apart.

Wordsworth was a teacher. Wordsworth led the romantic reaction. Wordsworth showed us the spiritual sources of joy under the new conditions of our social life. So be it. But poetry, you will remind me, is altogether a less pretentious affair; its function is, to give pleasure in the sphere of the beautiful. What beauty is, or by whom the pleasure is to be felt, these questions are beyond definition. Poetry depends on a variety of conditions,—observation, imagination, presentation; while its ultimate sentence is in the people's keeping. But if I were asked to define, not poetry itself, but the peculiar quality of Wordsworth's verse, I should characterise it as *selig*, as blessed. By borrowing a term from the German, we are able at once to distinguish the danger that lay in wait to betray the poet's genius. For *selig*, or blessed, has passed into English speech in its transliterative form of *silly*; and silliness, it must be admitted, as triviality of subject or ignobleness of style, is the excess of the virtue of blessedness. Its defect, in the opposite extreme, is worldly-mindedness; and it has been by the preponderance of the worldly-minded among us that the quality has been confounded with its own excess, that the *blessed* man in the Teutonic scheme appears in English as *silly*.

In triviality of matter or ignobleness of form we may recognise the betrayal of the virtue. Let us take this first. It was the aspect which first appealed to the susceptibilities of Wordsworth's reviewers. This "idiot boy," this "simple child," these weathercocks and thorns, were subjects unworthy, it was felt, of the dignity of the poet's craft. I have shown you the deliberate intention of such choice; but poetry is not saved by its intentions. I have shown you the historical value of the experiment; but successful adaptation counts for more than invention. Judged by a

plebiscite, *Enoch Arden* or the *Grandmother*, poems of equally trivial matter, would rank above *We are Seven.* They are saved by the manner of their treatment. Nevertheless, the experiment was at least successful, and in so far as it succeeded, the charge of triviality, as such, falls through. The attitude of the early reviewers is never likely to be repeated, for the so-called "Lake School" raised poetry to the level of common life, by refusing to degrade life to the level of conventional poetry. But, all admissions made, Wordsworth's defiance of his own critics occasionally led him to extremes. *The Redbreast chasing the Butterfly*, for instance, was a subject totally inadequate to the kind of treatment which it received. As a theme of declamation against nature's law of destruction, it might have served to point the moral; but as a protest addressed to the bird, begging him to spare the insect, because "his beautiful wings in crimson are drest, a crimson as bright as thine own!" it cannot but provoke a smile. It is an instance of silliness, of *Seligkeit* in excess. It was, however, on the side of ignobleness of style that Wordsworth's quality was more frequently betrayed. It was this aspect which appealed to the wiser counsels of his later reviewers. The contrast of tedium and enthusiasm, shadow and light, upon the poet's pages, induced Walter Pater to call for, and Matthew Arnold to supply, a golden treasury of his inspired pieces. To the uninitiated, if the word may be permitted, such a treasury is of the highest value. But to students of Wordsworth, the crystal phrases in the most earthen poem, the gleams breaking upon the gloom, are perhaps more prized for the sake of the contrast. This very ignobleness of which we were speaking,—what is it but the poet's confidence in the sympathetic understanding of his readers? Certain blemishes he removed; we have

noted them up and down the pages of this book; but a virtue, so lavishly bestowed as Wordsworth's was, is itself the apology of its occasional lapse.

Poetry should give pleasure; and the pleasure which Wordsworth gives is the pleasure and the grace of spring. It is the shining of the "rathe primrose," opening its green-gold leaves. It is the breath of morning across the furrows; the christening of brake, and copse, and weald, in a bath of white blossom; the tumbling of lambs, and colts new-foaled; the tenderness of all young things throughout the world, rapt in innocence and wonder. Their grace was his. His cult was the primrose, and his music was April's,—a hymn of 'opening.'

Wordsworth opened a new world to thought, and his song has something of the modesty of April. He does not only satisfy curiosity, but, as a more direct correlative of the 'blessed' quality in his work, he satisfies romance too. There is a fine passage in Cardinal Newman's *Loss and Gain*, which gives the key to Wordsworth's method: "When we ourselves were young, we once on a time walked on a hot summer day from Oxford to Newington—a dull road, as anyone who has gone it knows; yet it was new to us; and we protest to you, reader, believe it or not, laugh or not, as you will, to us it seemed on that occasion quite touchingly beautiful; and a soft melancholy came over us, of which the shadows fall even now, when we look back on that dusty, weary journey. And why? because every object which met us was unknown and full of mystery. A tree or two in the distance seemed the beginning of a great wood or park, stretching endlessly; a hill implied a vale beyond, with that vale's history; the bye-lanes, with their green hedges, wound and vanished, yet were not lost to the imagination. Such

was our first journey; but when we had gone it several times, the mind refused to act, the scene ceased to enchant, stern reality alone remained; and we thought it one of the most tiresome, odious roads we ever had occasion to traverse." Such imagination, brooding over the mysterious and unknown, belongs exclusively to spring. Summer is a pageantry, autumn a dirge, and winter a suspense; spring only is a benediction. And this 'blessedness,' or purity, or simplicity of mood was peculiarly Wordsworth's. Wordsworth was always going on his "first journey." To him, the "tree or two" of common sight seemed always to be receding into an endless vista:

> But there's a tree, or many one,
> A single field which I have looked upon,
> Both of them speak of something which is gone;
> The pansy at my feet
> Doth the same tale repeat;
> Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
> Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

It was his poetic mission to win this glory back, to

> add the gleam,
> The light that never was, on sea or land,
> The consecration, and the Poet's dream.

These lines, the first from the great *Ode*, the second from the *Elegiac Stanzas*, have been quoted again and again. It remains to realise them in the sense of the passage from Newman, as the secret of the season of spring.

There is nothing fanciful in this, nothing far-fetched. As we glance through the volume of Wordsworth's poetry, or—better still—as we review our impressions after studying the whole, it is to this that we recur: Wordsworth came down to the fields and works of men, and touched them with an enchanter's wand. He aroused, in Shelley's

phrase, "a sort of thought in sense." He shed, in Matthew Arnold's language, "On spirits that had long been dead . . . the freshness of the early world." He added contemplation to sight and hearing, so that he renders for us, not the literal features of things seen or heard, but the secondary being through which their influence is poured. His method was neither categorical, nor pictorial, but interpretative,—"a hill implied a vale beyond, with that vale's history;"* a "primrose on a river's brim†" was "a lasting link in nature's chain, from highest heaven let down;"‡ the cuckoo was "no bird, but an invisible thing, a voice, a mystery;"§ and nature's orchestra of song seemed "like some natural produce of the air, that could not cease to be."‖

We may safely neglect in this context the occasional lines of superlative beauty that meet us up and down the poet's pages. Spring itself does not arrest attention by single prominent charms; and Wordsworth's grace is primarily spiritual, not arrestive nor imposing. It is to complete poems that we should rather turn for the transformation which Wordsworth effects,—to the sonnet, *Composed upon Westminster Bridge*, where toiling London is new revealed, in the beauty of a giant asleep; to the *Farewell*, which is also an epithalamium, where the poet, starting to fetch his bride home, takes leave of the familiar scene, as though of a personal friend with concerns and interests of his own; to *Ruth*, ill-fated, returning, when her madness passed, to the scenes which had once been fair; to the *Solitary Reaper*, in some ways the loveliest poem of all, whose song carried the spirit of the valley

* Newman, *supra*.
† *Peter Bell*, p. 77, *supra*.
‡ *The Primrose of the Rock*.
§ *To the Cuckoo*, 1804.
‖ *Poems on the Naming of Places*, I.

over and beyond the hills; to the *Highland Girl* at Inversneyde, whose life in the poet's imagination so completely overshadowed her life in the flesh; to *Stepping Westward*, and the *Small Celandine*, and the *Daisy*,—the *loci classici* need not be enumerated. Wordsworth's readers know *how* to read him, and what to expect to find. They know when to exercise a tender sympathy with failing vision and faltering speech; they know when to give themselves unreservedly up to the magic and the enchantment of revelation. They know that they will look in vain for word-pictures of consummate art, for the ecstasy of divine discontent, for bars of music airy as smoke-wreaths. But they know that the poet can guide them securely through spaces of impassioned thought; that the level ways of the *Excursion* open out into table-lands of prospect; that the poet's fancy rises on 'quivering wings,' and gleams of a light from other worlds than ours break though the avenues of his imagination. They know that the teacher, who has so hopeful a lesson, so vital a purpose, for the times and the world we live in, is the poet who leads us by well-known paths through a new country blushing to a new spring:

> Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth
> And ocean's liquid mass, in gladness lay
> Beneath him :—Far and wide the clouds were touched,
> And in their silent faces could be read
> Unutterable love. Sound needed none,
> Nor any voice of joy; his spirit drank
> The spectacle : sensation, soul, and form,
> All melted into him; they swallowed up
> His animal being; in them did he live,
> And by them did he live; they were his life.
> In such access of mind, in such high hour
> Of visitation from the living God,
> Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired.

> No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request;
> Rapt into still communion that transcends
> The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
> His mind was a thanksgiving to the power
> That made him; it was blessedness and love!

This passage (*Excursion*, i. 201), concluding with the word which we chose to characterise the poet's virtue, gives us the poet at his best. It was inspired by a mountain sunrise, but it is obvious that the same "blessedness," evoked by circumstances, to our senses, *quantitatively*, less exalted, may become, not *selig*, but silly: and this is the final criticism of Wordsworth as a poet. At his imagination's height, in his human life no less than in the poetic one which he reared on its basis, "his animal being" was swallowed up. "Sensation, soul, and form, all melted into him," and out of their fusion came a vision transcending experience, like the promise in the blossoms of spring.

Wordsworth was a poet as well as a teacher; he added, I have said, contemplation to sight and hearing. But this implies a novel method of approach to nature which must still detain us for a moment. For Wordsworth as Priest in the Temple of Nature, is a third aspect of his genius. As Carlyle wrote, in the first of his *Lectures on Heroes*, "It is well said, in every sense, that a man's religion is the chief fact with regard to him. . . . By religion I do not here mean the church-creed which he professes. . . . But the thing a man does practically believe. . . . the thing a man does practically lay to heart, and know for certain, concerning his vital relations to this mysterious Universe, and his duty and destiny there, that is in all cases the primary thing for him, and creatively determines all the rest. That is his *religion*: . . . the manner it is in which he feels

himself to be spiritually related to the Unseen World or No-World." We have already considered the creative determination of Wordsworth's creed, its translation into conduct and law. I want now to draw the discussion backwards a step; to direct attention to Wordsworth's manner of feeling; to discover how it was that the prophet of democracy and the poet of spring was a priest of nature too. More and more tranquil this survey becomes; for we arrive in the presence of the things that abide, of the forces that transcend our own mortality, that take up our lives and determine them.

If a definition be necessary, Wordsworth's religion was an intellectual paganism. For the pagan, you need hardly be reminded, lived in the near presence of nature, and was peculiarly sensitive to the influence of every spot, to the *genius loci* of every valley, or hill, or rock, or tree. This sensitiveness was assisted by the conditions of his outdoor existence, by his dependence on nature, which made rain in its season a veritable God-send, and the thunderbolt an agent of wrath. Paganism, accordingly, deified this every genius; and the many gods of paganism were the shapes and forms of a religious worship,—the bonds of a service, to enjoy or to renounce, the means and the sanction of punishment or reward, the symbols of eternity and happiness. They established a relation between the Unknown and the Known. This pagan achievement of ignorance and fear Wordsworth effected through love and contemplation. The more intimate his acquaintance with nature became, the more deeply he felt the limits of sensation. Sense, unaided, cannot comprehend her; for the forest is more than a collection of trees, the tree more than a body clothed with leaves, the leaf itself something orderly and composed. Wordsworth stopped short of the weakness of

anthropomorphism. The articulated deities of pagan imagination can never appeal to the heirs of Hebraism. Its naiads, its dryads, and the rest, are signs in an imperfect language; they do not properly express, much less do they exhaust, the meaning of a stream or wood. Wordsworth perceived in nature's phenomena the same "something more" which paganism had translated into human shape; but he did not solidify it with a local habitation and a name. Rather he left it as an influence, a pervasion, in unadorned simplicity. No metaphor, no borrowing, should disguise the revelation of reason by the terminology of sense. Take, as a striking, but by no means a single instance, the thirtieth of the second series of miscellaneous sonnets:

> Brook! whose society the Poet seeks,
> Intent his wasted spirits to renew;
> And whom the curious Painter doth pursue
> Through rocky passes, among flowery creeks,
> And tracks thee dancing down thy water-breaks;
> If wish were mine some type of thee to view,
> Thee, and not thee thyself, I would not do
> Like Grecian artists, give thee human cheeks,
> Channels for tears; no Naiad should'st thou be,—
> Have neither limbs, feet, feathers, joints nor hairs:
> It seems the Eternal Soul is clothed in thee
> With purer robes than those of flesh or blood,
> And hath bestowed on thee a safer good;
> Unwearied joy, and life without its cares.

This, then, first: that Wordsworth was genuinely a worshipper of nature. He loved her in the beginning with a passoniate, in the end with an intellectual love. Her conduct and being, her activity and passiveness, even to the minutest waking of a blade of grass, were to him not only solemn and processional; they were full of meaning too, myriad witnesses to a single truth, the myriad Presence of a single Soul. Wordsworth's human figures

were bound by the same religiousness. They fall into their place in the landscape, and are touched to completeness by the same implicit purpose. The intellectual paganism which gathered from nature the scattered ciphers of the universe, and set them again to a perfect measure, relieved man of his trappings and externals, and subdued him to essential harmony. I might illustrate this habit of mind by quotations from the poet's works, but the passages should by now be familiar. Again and again the inexpressible is expressed,—pagan ideology raised to contemplative truth:

> The Being, that is in the clouds and air,
> That is in the green leaves among the groves,
> Maintains a deep and reverential care
> For the unoffending creatures whom he loves.
>
> *Hart-leap Well.*

> Therefore am I still
> A lover of the meadows and the woods,
> And mountains; and of all that we behold
> From this green earth; of all the mighty world
> Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,
> And what perceive.
>
> *Tintern Abbey.*

> Her procreant vigils Nature keeps
> Amid the unfathomable deeps.
>
> *Vernal Ode.*

Again and again man is brought into harmony with nature's scheme, and his perplexities are melted into music:

> He, long forced in humble walks to go
> Was softened into feeling, soothed and tamed.
>
> *Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle.*

The old Man still stood talking by my side;
But now his voice to me was like a stream
Scarce heard; nor word from word could I divide;
And the whole body of the Man did seem,
Like one whom I had met with in a dream;
Or like a man from some far region sent,
To give me human strength by apt admonishment.

Resolution and Independence.

And from the blessed power that rolls,
About, below, above,
We'll frame the measure of our souls:
They shall be tuned to love.

To my Sister.

Two ready reflections follow, if this habit of thought be understood: In the first place, the poet will have an unequalled facility for rendering, not the arrestive features, but the informing spirit of natural phenomena.* It is the "half-creative" acquirement of contemplation added to sense. Two examples may be given, because they occur in the same poems from which I have just now quoted:

His daily teachers had been woods and rills,
The silence that is in the starry sky,
The sleep that is among the quiet hills.

Brougham Castle.

Motionless as a cloud the old Man stood,
That heareth not the loud winds when they call;
And moveth all together, if it move at all.

Resolution and Independence.

Wordsworth has enriched our literature by countless passages of this kind, where the *genius* of a place or a spectacle is reproduced in its bare truthfulness. It is a treasury which no sister art, except perhaps music, can supply; and it refreshes the reader with a sense of breadth

* Cp. Chapter II., p. 52, *supra.*

and calm, which lends in its turn a new meaning to common things. And, in the second place, Wordsworth's intellectual paganism threw him back upon primitive humanity. This, apart from its democratic aspect, is the key to his *dramatis personæ*,—to the exaltation of the illiterate rustic in the *Poet's Epitaph*; to the rights of Betty Foy in the stanzas called by her name; to the many heroes of humble birth and wit. This too, from a scarcely different point of view, apart from its likeness to Platonic speculations, is Wordsworth's philosophy of the child. A child, in his early years, lives through the childhood of the race; and Wordsworth, accordingly, went to the nursery for the relations of nature and man. How he intellectualised these childish beliefs; how, in the white flame of abstract thought, the child's cosmogony of fairyland went the way of pagan polytheism, I have already tried to show. But as Wordsworth's reaction to primitive life for the experimental examples of his teaching was the correlative of the democratic idea, so, in the social sphere, Wordsworth's protection of childish imaginings and make-believe directly corresponded to the new care for children's education and happiness, which has received such many-sided impulse during the present generation. From any point of view, Wordsworth's poetry was set in the lines of enlightened progress and humanity.

In this imperfect summary, I have drawn your attention to three aspects of my subject, to Wordsworth as teacher, Wordsworth as poet, Wordsworth as priest. This was the consciously laborious life which he 'reared on the basis of his human one.' Time has justified his labours. More and more, as life grows fuller, and thought more difficult, men turn to Wordsworth in the pauses of the building for

the reading of the design. As one to whom the prophet's inspiration had come,

> So did he speak:
> The words he uttered shall not pass away
> Dispersed, like music that the wind takes up
> By snatches, and lets fall, to be forgotten;
> No—they sank into me, the bounteous gift
> Of one whom time and nature had made wise,
> Gracing his doctrine with authority
> Which hostile spirits silently allow;
> Of one accustomed to desires that feed
> On fruitage gathered from the tree of life;
> To hopes on knowledge and experience built;
> Of one in whom persuasion and belief
> Had ripened into faith, and faith become
> A passionate intuition; whence the soul,
> Though bound to earth by ties of pity and love
> From all injurious servitude was free.
>
> *Excursion*, iv. 1282.

It is to this ordered freedom that Wordsworth's readers finally recur.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND DATES

(*In volumes of Essays or Studies, containing one or more on Wordsworth, nearer paginal references are omitted.*)

1770. April 7. William Wordsworth, born at Cockermouth. He was the second of five children, born to John Wordsworth, law-agent to Lord Lonsdale, and to Anne, his wife, daughter of Christopher Cookson, mercer, of Penrith.

1772. October 21. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, born at Ottery St Mary, Devon.

1778. Mrs (Anne) Wordsworth died. Cf. *Prelude II.*, 232.
William goes to Hawkshead Grammar School, where he boards in Dame Tyson's Cottage.

1783. John Wordsworth, father of the poet, died.

1787. The poet goes up to St John's College, Cambridge.

1790. August. The poet on the Continent with Robert Jones.

1791. January. The poet graduated (B.A.) at Cambridge.
November. Wordsworth in France, to spend the winter at Orleans and Blois.

1792. October. Wordsworth in Paris.
December. He is recalled to London by want of funds.

1793. January. AN EVENING WALK. *An Epistle in verse. Addressed to a young lady, from the Lakes in the North of England.* By W. Wordsworth, B.A., of St John's, Cambridge. London, J. Johnson. 4to.

January. DESCRIPTIVE SKETCHES. *In verse. Taken during a Pedestrian Tour in the Italian, Grison, Swiss and Savoyard Alps.* By W. Wordsworth, B.A., of St John's, Cambridge. London, J. Johnson. 4to. This volume was dedicated to the Rev. Robert Jones.

STRICTURES ON THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION, *as written in* 1793 *in an Appendix to a Sermon preached before the Stewards of the Westminster Dispensary, at their Anniversary Meeting, Charlotte Street Chapel, April,* 1785. By R. Watson, D.D., Lord Bishop of Llandaff. London, T. Cadell, and Loughborough, Adams, jun. Shortly after the appearance of this pamphlet, Wordsworth wrote—but did not publish—

A LETTER TO THE BISHOP OF LLANDAFF, *on the Extraordinary Avowal of his Political Principles, Contained in the Appendix to his Late Sermon.* By a Republican.

1794. July 28. Robespierre was guillotined. Wordsworth thought of going to London, as a journalist, but stayed in Penrith to nurse Raisley Calvert.

1795. January. Raisley Calvert died, and left Wordsworth £900.
William and Dorothy Wordsworth settled at Racedown, Crewkerne,

Dorsetshire, in the autumn. Here Wordsworth and Coleridge met for the first time.

1797. June. Coleridge stayed with the Wordsworths at Racedown.
July. The Wordsworths moved to Alfoxden, near Netherstowey, Somerset, where S. T. Coleridge was living at this time.

1798. June 26. The Wordsworths left Alfoxden and travelled about in Northern England.
September 16. Coleridge and the Wordsworths left Yarmouth for Hamburg, in order to spend the winter in Germany.
LYRICAL BALLADS, *with a few other poems.* Bristol, Joseph Cottle; London, J. and A. Arch. 12mo. The volume was anonymous, and contained four poems by Coleridge, — "The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere," "The Foster-mother's Tale," "The Nightingale," and "The Dungeon."

1799. Review of *Lyrical Ballads* in *Monthly Review.*
December 21. William and Dorothy Wordsworth settled at Dove Cottage, Grasmere.

1800 ~~1801~~. LYRICAL BALLADS, *with other Poems.* In two volumes. By W. Wordsworth. London, T. N. Longman, 1800. 12mo. Vol. I. was a second edition of the 1798 publication, with Coleridge's "Love" added. It also contained Wordsworth's *Preface*, subsequently extended.

1802. October 4. William Wordsworth was married to Mary Hutchinson, in Brompton, Yorkshire.
LYRICAL BALLADS, *with Pastoral and other Poems.* In two volumes. By W. Wordsworth. (Vol. I. is a third, and vol. II. a second edition.) London, Longman & Rees.

1803. June 18. John Wordsworth, the poet's eldest son, born.
September 17. Wordsworth and Sir Walter Scott met for the first time at Lasswade, in the Highlands.

1804. August 16. Dorothy (Dora), the poet's second child, born.

1805. February. Captain John Wordsworth, the poet's youngest and favourite brother, is drowned in command of his ship, the Earl of Abergavenny, East India Service.
Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme published in 2 volumes a fourth (Vol. II., third) edition of the *Lyrical Ballads.*

1806. June 16. Thomas Wordsworth, the poet's third child, born.
The Wordsworths wintered at Coleorton, Leicestershire, in the neighbourhood of Sir George Beaumont.

1807. POEMS, in two volumes. By William Wordsworth, Author of the Lyrical Ballads. London, Longman, Hurst, Rees & Orme. 12mo.
August. Review of *Poems* by Lord Byron in *Monthly Literary Recreations.*
October. Review of *Poems* in *Edinburgh Review.*

1808. September 6. Catherine, the poet's fourth child, born.

1809. CONCERNING THE RELATIONS OF GREAT BRITAIN, SPAIN, AND PORTUGAL, TO EACH OTHER, AND TO THE COMMON ENEMY, AT THIS CRISIS; AND SPECIFICALLY AS AFFECTED BY THE CONVENTION OF CINTRA: *the whole brought to the test of those principles by which alone the Independence and Freedom of Nations can be*

Preserved or Recovered. By William Wordsworth. London, Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme. 8vo.

Letter in *The Friend*, signed Mathetes (Chr. North), on the subject of Youth and Experience. Wordsworth published in *The Friend* an anonymous *Reply to Mathetes.* The correspondence will be found in Grosart's edition of the Prose Works, 1876, volume II.

1810. May 12. William, the poet's fifth and youngest child, born.

February 22. ESSAY ON EPITAPHS in *The Friend.*

SELECT VIEWS IN CUMBERLAND, WESTMORELAND, AND LANCASHIRE. By Rev. Joseph Williamson. Twelve numbers in one folio. The Letter-press was by Wordsworth, and was reprinted in the *River Duddon* volume as "A Topographical Description of the Country of the Lakes."

In the autumn of this year Wordsworth and Coleridge became estranged.

1812. Thomas and Catherine, two young children of the poet, died at Grasmere Parsonage, where their parents were living for a while.

1813. The Wordsworths left Grasmere Parsonage for Rydal Mount, Grasmere.

The poet was appointed Distributor of Stamps for the County of Westmoreland, to which Cumberland was afterwards added, through the interest of Lord Lonsdale.

1814. THE EXCURSION, *being a portion of the Recluse, a Poem.* By William Wordsworth. London, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown. 4to.

October. Review of *The Excursion* in *Quarterly Review* (by Charles Lamb).

November. Review of *The Excursion* in *Edinburgh Review* (by Lord Jeffrey).

1815. POEMS, by William Wordsworth, *including Lyrical Ballads, and the Miscellaneous Pieces of the Author, with additional Poems, a new Preface, and a supplementary Essay.* In two volumes. London, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown. In this edition the distinctive classification by moods was for the first time adopted.

THE WHITE DOE OF RYLSTONE; *or, the Fate of the Nortons. A Poem.* By William Wordsworth. London, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown. 4to.

February. Review of *The Excursion* in *Monthly Review.*

October. Review of *The White Doe* in *Edinburgh Review.*

October. Reviews of *Poems* and *The White Doe* in *Quarterly Review.*

November. Reviews of *Poems* and *The White Doe* in *Monthly Review.*

1816. A LETTER TO A FRIEND OF ROBERT BURNS: *occasioned by an intended republication of the account of the Life of Burns, by Dr Currie; and of the selection made by him from his Letters.* By William Wordsworth. London, Longman. 8vo.

THANKSGIVING ODE, *January* 18, 1816. *With other Short Poems, chiefly referring to Recent Public Events.* By William Wordsworth. London, Longman.

1817. *Biographia Literaria*; *or, Biographical Sketches of a Literary Life and Opinions.* By Samuel Taylor Coleridge. (*Edito Princeps*). Two vols. London.

June. *Observations on Mr Wordsworth's Letter relative to a new edition of Burns' Works.* By a Friend of Robert Burns. *Blackwood's Magazine.*

October. *Vindication of Mr Wordsworth's Letter.* By N. *Blackwood's Magazine.* The November number of *Blackwood's* contained a correspondence closing the discussion.

1818. July. Article on *Essays on the Lake School of Poetry: I. The White Doe of Rylstone* in *Blackwood's Magazine.*

December. Second Article of the series on *The Habits of Thought inculcated by Wordsworth.*

TWO ADDRESSES TO THE FREEHOLDERS OF WESTMORELAND. Kendal, Airey and Bellingham. Portions had already been published in the *Kendal Chronicle* and the *Carlisle Patriot.* They will be found in Grosart's edition of the Prose Works, 1876, vol. I.

Lectures on the English Poets. By William Hazlitt. London.

1819. PETER BELL, *a tale in verse.* By William Wordsworth. London, Longman. A second Edition was issued during the same year.

THE WAGGONER, *a Poem, to which are added, Sonnets.* By William Wordsworth. London, Longman.

May. Review of *Peter Bell* in *Blackwood's Magazine.*

August. Review of *Peter Bell* in *Monthly Review.*

September. Review of *The Waggoner* in *Monthly Review.*

The Dead Asses. A Lyrical Ballad. London, Smith & Elder. (A Burlesque, probably by John Hamilton Reynolds, published in anticipation of *Peter Bell.* The Preface is signed "W. W.")

1820. THE RIVER DUDDON, *a Series of Sonnets: Vaudracour and Julia: and other Poems. To which is annexed, a Topographical Description of the Country of the Lakes in the North of England.* By William Wordsworth. London, Longman.

THE MISCELLANEOUS POEMS OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH. In four volumes. London, Longman. This edition was complete up to date, excepting the *Excursion.* The verse publications of 1819 and 1820 formed volume III.

In this year, too, Messrs Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown issued a second Edition of *The Excursion.*

May. Review of *The River Duddon* in *Blackwood's Magazine.*

October. Review of *The River Duddon* in *Monthly Review.*

1822. MEMORIALS OF A TOUR ON THE CONTINENT, 1820. By William Wordsworth. London, Longman.

ECCLESIASTICAL SKETCHES. By William Wordsworth. London, Longman.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE SCENERY OF THE LAKES IN THE NORTH OF ENGLAND. *Third edition (now first published separately), with additions and illustrative remarks upon the scenery of the Alps.* By William Wordsworth. London, Longman. (The first edition had been in Mr Williamson's volume of *Views,* 1810; the second in River Duddon, 1820; a fourth appeared in 1823, a fifth in 1835, a sixth in 1842, and a seventh in 1849).

August. Article on *Sonnets and Memorials* in *Blackwood's Magazine.*

November. Review of *Memorials of a Tour on the Continent* in *Edinburgh Review.*

1824. April. Article on *Wordsworth's Poems*, by F. W. P. Greenwood, in *North American Review*.

Wordsworth's *Works* in four volumes were reprinted from Longman's collected edition of 1820, in Boston, U.S.A.

Select British Poets, or New Elegant Extracts from Chaucer to the Present Time, with critical remarks. By William Hazlitt. London, W. C. Hall. (This book was suppressed, and its republication in the following year omitted the living poets, Wordsworth among them).

1827. THE POETICAL WORKS OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH. In five volumes. London, Longman. This is the first complete uniform edition. The *Excursion* was contained in volume V. The five volumes were re-issued in one by Galignani, Paris, in the following year.

1829. September. Article on *The Theory and Writings of Wordsworth, I.* in *Blackwood's Magazine*. The October, November, and December numbers contained the second, third and concluding parts of this article.

1831. *Selections from the Poems of William Wordsworth. Chiefly for the use of Schools and Young People.* Edited by J. Hine. London, Moxon.

1832. *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth. A New Edition.* In four volumes. London, Longman.

1834. *Selections from the Poems of William Wordsworth. Chiefly for the Use of Schools and Young Persons.* London, Moxon. (The same pieces, but differently edited, as J. Hine's *Selection*, 1831).

1835. YARROW REVISITED, *and other Poems.* By William Wordsworth. London, Longman, and London, Moxon.

A GUIDE THROUGH THE DISTRICT OF THE LAKES IN THE NORTH OF ENGLAND. By William Wordsworth. Fifth Edition, with considerable additions. Kendal, Hudson, and Nicholson. London, Longman; London, Moxon; and London, Whittaker.

May. Article on *Wordsworth's New Volume*, in *Blackwood's Magazine*.

July. Review of *Yarrow Revisited* in *Quarterly Review*.

August. Article on *Poètes et Romanciers de la Grande Bretagne: William Wordsworth* in *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

Dorothy Wordsworth, the poet's sister, became a confirmed mental invalid.

1836. *Yarrow Revisited.* Second Edition. London, Longman, and London, Moxon.

The Excursion. A new Edition. London, Moxon.

THE POETICAL WORKS OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH. A new Edition. In six volumes. London, E. Moxon. This issue contained the 1835 Poems. It was stereotyped and often reprinted. Editions after 1842 included a seventh volume, *Poems, Chiefly of Early and Late Years*, and editions after 1850 an eighth volume, *The Prelude*.

1837. *The Complete Works of William Wordsworth, together with a Description of the Country of the Lakes in North England.* Edited by Henry Reed, Professor of English Literature in Pennsylvania University. Philadelphia, J. Kay, junior, and Brother. This double-columned edition was the prototype of Moxon's in 1845.

1837. *Early Recollections of S. T. Coleridge.* In two volumes. By Joseph Cottle. London.

1838. THE SONNETS OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH. *Collected in one volume, with a few additional ones, now first published.* London, E. Moxon.

1839. E. Moxon published a third separate edition, in 18mo, of *Yarrow Revisited, and other Poems.*

Wordsworth received the honorary degree of D.C.L. in the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford. He was introduced by Keble, author of *The Christian Year.*

1841. *The Poems of Geoffrey Chaucer.* Modernised by R. H. Horne, W. Wordsworth, and others. London.

March. Essay on *Wordsworth* in *Blackwood's Magazine.*

December. Article on *Wordsworth's Sonnets* in *Quarterly Review.*

Dorothy (Dora), daughter of the poet, was married to Edward Quillinan, a widower, ex-officer of the Guards. Rotha Quillinan, the poet's god-child, was the daughter of his son-in-law by the *first* Mrs Quillinan.

1842. POEMS, CHIEFLY OF EARLY AND LATE YEARS; *including The Borderers, a Tragedy.* By William Wordsworth. London, E. Moxon. (This formed volume VII. in subsequent editions of Moxon's stereotyped *Works* of 1836).

March. Southey, Poet Laureate, died. Earl de la Warr, Lord Chamberlain, offered Wordsworth the vacant laurel. On the poet's refusal, the offer was repeated by Sir Robert Peel, who expressed the wishes of the Queen and nation, and William Wordsworth became Poet Laureate.

June. Review of *Poems, Chiefly of Early and Late Years,* in *Monthly Review.*

October. Wordsworth's name, at the instance of Sir Robert Peel, was placed on the Civil List for an annuity of £300.

1843. SELECT PIECES FROM THE POEMS OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, D.C.L., P.L. Dedicated to H.M. the Queen. London, J. Burns.

1844. KENDAL AND WINDERMERE RAILWAY. Two Letters, reprinted from *The Morning Post.* Kendal, R. Branthwaite & Son (N.D.).

A New Spirit of the Age; William Wordsworth and Leigh Hunt. Vol. I. By R. H. Horne. London, Smith, Elder & Co.

1845. *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, D.C.L., Poet Laureate, etc., etc.* A New Edition. London, E. Moxon. Royal 8vo. (This single-volume, double-columned edition was based on Professor Reed's, Philadelphia, 1837. It was often reprinted, and included *The Prelude* after 1850.)

Gallery of Literary Portraits. By George Gilfillan. Edinburgh, Blackwood.

1847. ODE, *Performed in the Senate-house, Cambridge, July 6th, at the first Commencement after the Installation of H.R.H. Prince Albert, Chancellor of the University.* Cambridge, University Press.

July 10. This *Ode* was published in the *Athenæum.*

July. Dorothy (Dora) Quillinan, the poet's daughter, died at Rydal Mount.

1849. Edward Moxon published a new edition of the *Poetical Works.*

This was the last issue during Wordsworth's life-time. There were six volumes, the sixth containing the *Excursion*. This volume was reprinted separately in 1851, 1853, and 1857.

Notes from Books, in Four Essays. By Sir Henry Taylor. London.

1850. William Wordsworth, D.C.L., Poet Laureate, died at Rydal Mount, on April 23rd.

April 27. Obituary notice in the *Athenæum*.

Gallery of Literary Portraits. Second Series. By George Gilfillan. Edinburgh, Blackwood.

THE PRELUDE; *or, Growth of a Poet's Mind; an autobiographical Poem.* By William Wordsworth. London, Moxon. An American edition, in duodecimo, was almost immediately published by D. Appleton, in New York.

August 3. Reviews of the *Prelude* in the *Athenæum* and *Spectator*.

1851. E. Moxon published a second edition of *The Prelude*, to form volume viii. of his 1836 edition of the *Poetical Works*.

The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, P.-L. Edited by Professor Henry Reed. Revised. Philadelphia, Troutman and Hayes.

Memoirs of William Wordsworth. Including the Autobiographical Memoranda dictated to the Author at Rydal in November, 1847. By Christopher Wordsworth, Bp. of Lincoln. In two volumes. London, Moxon.

Sketches of the Poetical Literature of the past Half-century. By David M. Moir. London, Blackwood.

October. Article on *The Life and Poetry of Wordsworth* in *North American Review*.

1852. *Memoirs of William Wordsworth.* By January Searle. London.

December. Article on *Memoirs of Wordsworth* in *Quarterly Review*.

1853. *The Genius of Wordsworth harmonised with the Wisdom and Integrity of his Reviewers.* By the late John Wright. London, Longman.

An Essay on the Poetry of Wordsworth. Reprinted from the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine.* Liverpool.

1854. *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth.* With a Memoir (by J. R. Lowell). In seven volumes. Boston, Little, Brown & Co. 16mo.

1856. *Essays and Reviews.* By Edwin P. Whipple. In two volumes. Boston.

William Wordsworth; a Biography. By E. P. Hood, London.

June. Article on *Wordsworth's Poems* in *Dublin Review*. (By Cardinal Wiseman?)

1857. *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth.* A new edition. In six volumes. London, Moxon. The Fenwick Notes (dictated by the Poet to Miss Fenwick) are first printed here.

The Earlier Poems of William Wordsworth, corrected as in the Latest Editions. By W. Johnston. London, Moxon.

1858. *The Pastoral Poems of William Wordsworth*, with engravings. London.

Lectures and Addresses on Literary and Social Topics. By F. W. Robertson. London. (See 1896.)

1859. *Lectures on English Poetry.* By Henry Reed. (Wordsworth, No. xv.). London.

Poems of William Wordsworth. Selected and edited by R. A. Willmott. Illustrated by Birket Foster, John Wolf, and J. Gilbert. London, Routledge.

The Deserted Cottage. By William Wordsworth. Illustrated by Birket Foster, J. Wolf, and J. Gilbert. London, Routledge. (The last two volumes were also published in New York, 18 Beckman Street).

The White Doe of Rylstone. By William Wordsworth. Illustrated by H. N. Humphreys, and Birket Foster. London, Longman.

Passages from "the Excursion," by Wlliam Wordsworth. Illustrated with Etchings on Steel, by Agnes Fraser. London, P. and D. Colnaghi, Publishers to Her Majesty.

1860. Article on *Wordsworth* in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, xxi. by R. Carruthers.

1862. *Recollections of the Lakes and the Lake Poets*, being volume II., and *On Wordworth's Poetry*, being part of volume V. of Thomas De Quincey's *Collected Works.* Edinburgh, A. and C. Black.

Poets and Preachers of the Nineteenth Century. Four Lectures . . . by A. S. Patterson. Glasgow.

1863. *Wordsworth's Poems for the Young.* Illustrated by J. MacWhirter and J. Pettie. London and Edinburgh.

1864. *Our English Lakes, Mountains, and Waterfalls, as seen by William Wordsworth.* Photographically illustrated by T. Ogle. London.

November. Essay on *Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning, or Pure, Ornate and Grotesque Art in English Poetry*, in *National Review.* By W. Bagehot. (Reprinted in his *Literary Studies*, volume II. Silver Library. Longman, 1895.)

A *Tauchnitz* Selection from Wordsworth, in two volumes, for Continental circulation, was published during this year at Leipzig.

1865. *A Selection from the Works of William Wordsworth.* By J. T. Palgrave. *Moxon's Miniature Poets.* London, Moxon. A second edition appeared in 1869, and a Pocket edition was issued in 1885, and has been republished.

April. Article on *The Works of William Wordsworth*, by A. H. Clough, in *North American Review.*

1866. *Essays, Critical, etc.* By John Wilson. London, Blackwood.

1867. Messrs Bell & Daldy, London, Fleet Street, published a reprint of the illustrated edition of *The White Doe of Rylstone*, Longman, 1859.

1868. *Essays.* By George Brimley. (Pp. 102-183). London, Macmillan.

1869. *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence.* By Henry Crabb Robinson. Selected, etc., by T. Sadler. In three volumes. London. (Third edition, in two volumes, 1872.)

1870. *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth.* (A reprint of the six-volume edition of 1857.) *Centenary Edition.* London, E. Moxon.

In this year, too, Mr Moxon published "the only complete cheap edition" of the *Poetical Works* in a single volume (N.D.). It was edited, with a Critical Memoir, by W. M. Rossetti, but the Memoir

was subsequently withdrawn at the request of Wordsworth's surviving relatives.

Among My Books. By J. R. Lowell. Boston, Mass.

1871. September. Article on *A Century of Great Poets, III. William Wordsworth* in *Blackwood's Magazine.*

1872. *A Lecture on cheap and accessible Pleasures, with a Comparative Sketch of the Poetry of Burns and Wordsworth.* By Lord Neaves, Edinburgh.

1873. *A Comparative Estimate of Modern English Poets.* By Joseph Devey. London, Moxon.

Old Age in Bath. Recollections, . . . to which are added a few unpublished Remains of William Wordsworth. By Henry Julian Hunter. Bath, W. Lewis.

1874. *Wordsworth.* Edited by T. L. Ashland. *The Poets of Lakeland.*

Selections from the Poetical Works of William Wordsworth. By H. H. Turner. Stow's *English School Classics.* London.

Recollections of a Tour in Scotland. By Dorothy Wordsworth. London. (See 1894.)

Theology in the English Poets. By Rev. Stopford A. Brooke. London, Kegan Paul.

1875. *Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, etc.* By David Masson. London, Macmillan.

Leben und Gedichte Wordsworths. By Prof. Fels. Hamburg.

October. Article on *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth.* By Professor Edward Dowden in *Fortnightly Review.*

1876. THE PROSE WORKS OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH. *For the first time collected, with Additions from Unpublished MSS.* Edited, with Preface, Notes and Illustrations, by Rev. Alexander B. Grosart. In three volumes. London, E. Moxon, Son, & Co.

Studies in Poetry and Philosophy. By J. C. Shairp. Edinburgh, Edmonston and Douglas.

January. Article on *Wordsworth and Gray* (Review of Grosart's Prose Works of Wordsworth) in *Quarterly Review.*

1877. *The Poetic Interpretation of Nature.* By J. C. Shairp. Edinburgh, Douglas.

Lectures on Poetry. Delivered at Oxford by Sir Francis Hastings Doyle. Second Series. London, Smith, Elder & Co.

1878. *The English Lake District, as interpreted in the Poems of Wordsworth.* By W. Knight. Edinburgh, Douglas.

Wordsworth. By F. W. H. Myers. *English Men of Letters.* London, Macmillan. (Often re-issued).

Wordsworth. A biographic æsthetic study. By George Henry Calvert. Boston.

November. Article on *The Text of Wordsworth's Poems,* by Professor E. Dowden, in *Contemporary Review.*

1879. *Poems of Wordsworth.* Chosen and edited by Matthew Arnold. With a Preface. *Golden Treasury Series.* London, Macmillan. (Frequently re-issued).

Hours in a Library. Third Series. By Leslie Stephen. London, Smith, Elder.

Studies in Philosophy and Literature. By Prof. W. Knight. London, Kegan Paul.

July. Essay on *Wordsworth,* by Matthew Arnold, in *Macmillan's*

the reading of the design. As one to whom the prophet's inspiration had come,

> So did he speak:
> The words he uttered shall not pass away
> Dispersed, like music that the wind takes up
> By snatches, and lets fall, to be forgotten;
> No—they sank into me, the bounteous gift
> Of one whom time and nature had made wise,
> Gracing his doctrine with authority
> Which hostile spirits silently allow;
> Of one accustomed to desires that feed
> On fruitage gathered from the tree of life;
> To hopes on knowledge and experience built;
> Of one in whom persuasion and belief
> Had ripened into faith, and faith become
> A passionate intuition; whence the soul,
> Though bound to earth by ties of pity and love
> From all injurious servitude was free.
>
> *Excursion*, iv. 1282.

It is to this ordered freedom that Wordsworth's readers finally recur.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND DATES

(*In volumes of Essays or Studies, containing one or more on Wordsworth, nearer paginal references are omitted.*)

1770. April 7. William Wordsworth, born at Cockermouth. He was the second of five children, born to John Wordsworth, law-agent to Lord Lonsdale, and to Anne, his wife, daughter of Christopher Cookson, mercer, of Penrith.

1772. October 21. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, born at Ottery St Mary, Devon.

1778. Mrs (Anne) Wordsworth died. Cf. *Prelude II.*, 232.
William goes to Hawkshead Grammar School, where he boards in Dame Tyson's Cottage.

1783. John Wordsworth, father of the poet, died.

1787. The poet goes up to St John's College, Cambridge.

1790. August. The poet on the Continent with Robert Jones.

1791. January. The poet graduated (B.A.) at Cambridge.
November. Wordsworth in France, to spend the winter at Orleans and Blois.

1792. October. Wordsworth in Paris.
December. He is recalled to London by want of funds.

1793. January. AN EVENING WALK. *An Epistle in verse. Addressed to a young lady, from the Lakes in the North of England.* By W. Wordsworth, B.A., of St John's, Cambridge. London, J. Johnson. 4to.
January. DESCRIPTIVE SKETCHES. *In verse. Taken during a Pedestrian Tour in the Italian, Grison, Swiss and Savoyard Alps.* By W. Wordsworth, B.A., of St John's, Cambridge. London, J. Johnson. 4to. This volume was dedicated to the Rev. Robert Jones.
STRICTURES ON THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION, *as written in* 1793 *in an Appendix to a Sermon preached before the Stewards of the Westminster Dispensary, at their Anniversary Meeting, Charlotte Street Chapel, April,* 1785. By R. Watson, D.D., Lord Bishop of Llandaff. London, T. Cadell, and Loughborough, Adams, jun. Shortly after the appearance of this pamphlet, Wordsworth wrote—but did not publish—
A LETTER TO THE BISHOP OF LLANDAFF, *on the Extraordinary Avowal of his Political Principles, Contained in the Appendix to his Late Sermon.* By a Republican.

1794. July 28. Robespierre was guillotined. Wordsworth thought of going to London, as a journalist, but stayed in Penrith to nurse Raisley Calvert.

1795. January. Raisley Calvert died, and left Wordsworth £900.
William and Dorothy Wordsworth settled at Racedown, Crewkerne,

on *A Comparison and Parallel between the Work of Wordsworth and Turner*, by Mr Harry Godwin; *Wordsworth's Relation to Science*, by Spence Watson; *List* of Wordsworth's Poems in chronological order, by W. Knight, and a reprint of *Bibliography*.

1886. *Essays on Poetry and Poets*. By Hon. Roden Noel. London, Kegan Paul.

Miscellanies. By A. C. Swinburne. London, Chatto & Windus. (See under 1884).

July 7. Seventh and last Annual Meeting of *Wordsworth Society*, in Jerusalem Chamber, Westminster Abbey.

Volume VIII. of *Transactions* contained *Minutes* and *Address*; papers on *The Theism of Wordsworth*, by Professor Veitch; *Poets who helped to form Wordsworth's Style*, by Canon Ainger; *The Humanity of Wordsworth*, by Rev. H. D. Rawnsley; *Letters* from Wordsworth, his wife, and sister, to Henry Crabb Robinson and others.

1887. *Essays, chiefly on Poetry*. By Aubrey de Vere. London, Macmillan. (Three essays relate to Wordsworth).

Memorials of Coleorton. Edited, etc., by W. Knight. Edinburgh, Douglas.

Through the Wordsworth Country. By Harry Godwin and W. Knight. London. Swan Sonnenschein. (Pictures by H. Godwin. Text by W. Knight).

William Wordsworth: The Story of his Life, with critical remarks on his writings. By J. M. Sutherland. London, Elliot Stock. (Second edition, enlarged, 1892).

A Greenockian's Visit to Wordsworth. From Journals of the late Dr Park, of St Andrews. Greenock, A. P. Paton.

1888. THE RECLUSE. By William Wordsworth. London, Macmillan. (This was the *Editio Princeps* of Part I., Book First, of the Poem, of which *The Excursion* had been designed to form the second of three parts).

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